ſtop to them. Let Chriſt's ſervants be never ſo reſolute, Satan's agents will be ſpiteful; and therefore let Satan's agents be never ſo ſpiteful, Chriſt's ſervants ought to be reſolute.

Ver. 5—14. Obſerve, 1. Our ſalvation is our chief concern, and that which ought to be neareſt our hearts; our reſcue from wrath and the curſe, and our reſtoration to God and the bleſſing.

2. Our ſalvation is not in ourſelves, nor can be obtained by any merit or ſtrength of our own. We can deſtroy ourſelves, but we cannot ſave ourſelves.

3. There are among men many names that pretend to be ſaving names, but really are not ſo; many inſtitutions in religion that pretend to ſettle a reconciliation and correſpondence between God and man, but cannot do it.

4. It is only by Chriſt and his name that thoſe favours can be expected from God which are neceſſary to our ſalvation, and that our ſervices can be accepted with God.

Thoſe who *have been with Jesus*, in converſe and communion with him, have been attending on his word, praying in his name, and celebrating the memorials of his death and reſurrection, ſhould carry themſelves, ſo as that thoſe who converſe with them may *take knowledge of them that they have been with Jesus:* and that makes them ſo holy and heavenly, and ſpiritual and chearful; that has raiſed them ſo much above this world, and filled them with ano-

ther. One may know they have been in the mount by the ſhining of their faces.

Ver. 23—31. In *threatening* times our care ſhould not be ſo much that troubles may be prevented, as that we may be enabled to go on with chearfulneſs and reſolution in our work and duty, whatever troubles we may meet with.

Ver. 32—37. Great care ought to be taken in the diſtributions of public charity.

1. That it be given to ſuch as *have need*, who are not able to procure a competent maintenance for themſelves, through age, infancy, ſickneſs, or bodily diſability, or incapacity of mind, want either of ingenuity or activity, croſs providences, loſſes, oppreſsions, a numerous charge. Thoſe that upon any of theſe accounts, or any other, have real need, and have not relations of their own to help them; but above all, thoſe who are reduced to want for well doing, and for *the testimony of a good conscience*, ought to be taken care of and provided for, and, with a prudent application of what is given, ſo as may be moſt for their benefit.

2. That it be given *to every man* for whom it is intended, *according as he hath need*, without partiality or reſpect of perſons. It is a rule in deſpenſing charity, as well as in adminiſtering juſtice, that thoſe who are equally needing and equally deſerving, ſhould be equally helped, and that the charity ſhould be ſuited and adapted to the neceſsity.

CHAP. V.

Ver. 1—11. This chapter begins with a melancholy *but*, which puts a ſtop to the pleaſant and agreeable proſpect of things, which we had in the foregoing chapters. As every man, ſo every church, in its preſent ſtate, has its *but*. There is a mixture of bad with good in the beſt ſocieties on this ſide heaven. *Tares* will grow among *the wheat until the harvest.*

Ananias, and Sapphira his wife, agreed together in lying to the Holy Ghoſt; making the bond of their relation to each other, which by the divine inſtitution is a ſacred tie, to become a bond of iniquity. It is hard to ſay which is worſe between yoke-fellows and other relations, a diſcord in good, or concord in evil.

As Adam and Eve, who agreed to eat the forbidden fruit, were turned together out of paradiſe; ſo Ananias and Sapphira, who agreed to *tempt the Spirit of the Lord*, were together *chased out of the world.*

Ver. 17—25. There is no priſon ſo dark, ſo ſtrong, but God can both viſit his people in it, and fetch them out of it.

If we may but be ſatisfied concerning our duty, our buſineſs is to keep cloſe to that, and then we may chearfully truſt God with our ſafety.

Ver. 26—42. People's being unwilling to hear of their faults is no good reaſon why they ſhould not be faithfully told of them. It is a common excuſe made for not reproving ſin, that the *times will not bear it*. But they whoſe office it is to reprove muſt not be awed by that; the times muſt bear it, and ſhall bear it. *Cry aloud and ſpare not*; cry aloud and fear not.

Obſerve, 1. Repentance and remiſſion go together. Wherever repentance is wrought, remiſsion is, without fail, granted: and on the other hand, no remiſsion without repentance. None are freed from the guilt and puniſhment of ſin, but thoſe who are freed from the power and dominion of ſin; that are turned from it, and turned againſt it.

2. It is *Jesus Christ* that *gives*, and is authoriſed to give both repentance and remiſsion. Chriſt is appointed to give repentance, by his Spirit working with the word, to awaken the conſcience, to work contrition for ſin, and an effectual change in the heart and life. The new heart is his work, and the broken ſpirit a ſacriſice of his providing; and when he has given repentance, if he ſhould not give remiſſion, he would *forsake the work of his own hands*.

It may be the comfort of all who are ſincerely on God's ſide, that have a ſingle eye to his will as their rule, and his glory as their end, that whatſoever is of *God*, *cannot be overthrown* totally and

finally, though it may be very vigorouſly oppoſed: it may be run upon, but cannot be run down.

CHAP. VI.

Ver. 1—7. Having ſeen the church's ſtruggles with her enemies, and triumphed with her in her victories, we now come to take a view of the adminiſtration of its affairs at home; and here we have,

Firſt, An unhappy diſagreement among ſome of the church's members, which might have been of ill conſequence, but was prudently accommodated and taken up in time.

1. It doth our hearts good to find *that the number of the disciples* is multiplied, as no doubt it vexed *the priests and Sadducees* to the heart to ſee it. The oppoſition which the preaching of the goſpel met with, inſtead of checking its progreſs, contributed to the ſucceſs of it; and this infant chriſtian church, like the infant Jewiſh church in Egypt, the more it was afflicted, *the more it multiplied.*

2. Yet it caſts a damp upon us to find *that the multiplying of the disciples* proves an occaſion of diſcord. Hitherto *they were all with one accord*; this had been often taken notice of to their honour; but now *they were multiplied*, they began *to murmur*; as in the old world, when men began to multiply, they corrupted themſelves.

Obſerve, The firſt contention in the chriſtian church was about a money matter; but it is pity

that the *little things of this world* ſhould be make-baits among thoſe who profeſs to be taken up with *the great things of another world.* A great deal of money was gathered for the relief of the poor; but, as uſeth to be in ſuch caſes, it was impoſſible to pleaſe every body in the laying of it out.

The apostles, at whose feet it was laid, did their beſt to diſpoſe of it ſo as to anſwer the intentions of the donors; and no doubt deſigned to do it with the utmoſt impartiality, and were far from repecting the Hebrews more than the Grecians; aud yet here they are complained to, and implicitly complained of, *that the Grecian widows were neglected;* though they were as real objects of charity, yet they had not ſo much allowed them, or not to ſo many, or not ſo duly paid them, as *the Hebrews.*

Secondly, the happy accommodation of this matter, and the expedient pitched upon for taking away the cauſe of this murmuring. This expedient was the ſetting apart ſeven men of honeſt report, who were particularly appointed to manage this buſineſs.

Note, Thoſe who are employed in any office in the church, ought to be men of *honest report,* of a blameleſs, nay, of a beautiful character, which is requiſite not only to the credit of their office, but to the due diſcharge of it.

Ver. 8—15. Wiſdom and holineſs make a man's face to ſhine, and yet theſe will not ſecure men from the greateſt indignities; and no wonder, when the

ſhining of Stephen's face could not be his protection; though it had been eaſy to prove, that if he had been guilty of putting any diſhonour upon Moſes, God would not have thus put Moſes's honour upon him.

CHAP. VII.

Ver. 30—41. 1. The words of God are *oracles*, certain and infallible, and of unqueſtionable authority and obligation. They are to be conſulted as oracles, and by them all controverſies muſt be determined.

2. They are *lively oracles*, for they are *the oracles of the living God*, not of the dumb and dead idols of the heathens. The word that God ſpeaks is *ſpirit and life*; not that the laws of Moſes could give life; but it ſhewed the way to life. *If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.*

3. Moſes received them from God, and delivered nothing as an oracle to the people, but what *he had first received from God*.

4. *The lively oracles* which he received from God he faithfully gave to the people, to be obſerved and preſerved. It was the principal privilege of the Jews, that *to them were committed the oracles of God:* and it was by the hand of Moſes that they were committed. As Moſes gave them not that bread, ſo neither did he give them that law *from*

heaven, John vi. 32. but God gave it them; and he who gave them those customs by his servant Moses, might, no doubt, when he pleased, change the customs by his Son Jesus, who has received more lively oracles to give unto us, than Moses did.

Ver. 54—60. We have here the death of the first martyr of the christian church; and there is in this story a lively instance of the outrage and fury of the persecutors, such as we may expect to meet with, if we are called out to suffer for Christ, and of the courage and comfort of the persecuted, that are thus called out. Here is Hell in its fire and darkness, and heaven in its light and brightness; and these here serve as foils to set off each other.

It is very common for a righteous cause, particularly the righteous cause of Christ's religion, to be endeavoured to be run down by noise and clamour. What is wanting in reason is made up in tumult; and *the cry of him who ruleth among fools, while the words of the wise are heard in quiet.*

When Stephen was chosen to public service, he was described to be a man *full of the Holy Ghost*, chap. vi. 5. and now he is called out to martyrdom, he has still the same character. Note, They who are full of the Holy Ghost are fit for any thing, either to do for Christ, or to suffer for him: and those whom God calls out to hard services for his name, he will qualify them for those services, and carry them comfortably through them, by filling them with the Holy Ghost; that as their afflictions for Christ do abound,

their consolation in him may yet more abound, and then *none of these things move them.* Nothing so comfortable to dying saints, nor so animating to suffering saints, as to see Jesus at the right hand of God; and, blessed be God, by faith we may see him there.

It is good to die praying. Then we need help; strength we never had, to do a work we never did; and how must we fetch in that help and strength but by prayer? Death is but a sleep to good people; not the sleep of the soul, Stephen had given that up into Christ's hands, but the sleep of the body. It is its rest from all its griefs and toils. Stephen died as much in a hurry as ever any man did, and yet when he died he fell asleep. He applied himself to his dying work with as much composure of mind as if he had been going to sleep. It was but closing his eyes and dying. Observe, he fell asleep when he was praying for his persecutors. It is expressed as if he thought he could not die in peace till he had done that. It contributes very much to our dying comfortably, to die in charity with all men. We are then found of Christ in peace. Let not the sun of life go down upon our wrath.

CHAP. VIII.

Ver. 1—3. Though persecution may not drive us off from our work, yet it may send us, as a hint of Providence, to work elsewhere.

Ver. 4—25. Samſon's riddle is here again unriddled; *Out of the eater comes forth meat, and out of the strong sweetness.* The perſecution that was deſigned to extirpate the church, was by the over-ruling providence of God made an occaſion of the enlargement of it. Chriſt had ſaid, *I am come to send fire on the earth:* and his enemies thought by ſcattering thoſe who were kindled with that fire to have put it out, but inſtead of that they did but help to ſpread it.

We have no reaſon to think that Philip did amiſs in baptiſing Simon Magus; no nor in baptiſing him quickly after he became a convert to the faith of Chriſt in ſhew and profeſſion. Though he had been a very wicked man, a ſorcerer, a pretender to divine honours, yet upon his ſolemn profeſsion of repentance for his ſin, and faith in Jeſus Chriſt, he was baptiſed. For as great wickedneſs before converſion, keeps not true penitents from the benefits of God's grace, ſo neither ſhould it keep profeſsing ones from church-fellowſhip. Prodigals, when they return, muſt be joyfully-welcomed home, though we cannot be ſure, but that they will play the prodigal again. Nay, though he was now but an hypocrite, and really *in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity* all this while, and would ſoon have been found to be ſo if he had been tried awhile, yet Philip baptiſed him; for it is God's prerogative to know the heart. The church and its miniſters muſt go by a judgment of charity, as far as there is room

for it. It is a maxim in the law, *Donec contrarium patet semper præsumitur meliori parti;* we muſt hope the beſt as long as we can; and it is a maxim in the diſcipline of the church, *De secretis non judicat ecclesia;* the ſecrets of the heart God only judgeth.

Ver. 26—40. Philip finds the Eunuch reading in his bible, as he ſat in his chariot. Perhaps he was now reading over again thoſe portions of ſcripture which he had heard read and expounded at Jeruſalem, that he might recollect what he had heard.

Note, 1. It is the duty of every one of us to converſe much with the Holy Scriptures.

2. Perſons of quality ſhould abound more than others in the exerciſes of piety, becauſe their example will influence many, and they have their time more at command.

3. It is wiſdom for men of buſineſs to redeem time for holy duties. Time is precious, and it is the beſt husbandry in the world, to *gather up the fragments* of time *that none be lost;* to fill up every minute of time with ſomething that will turn to good account.

4. When we are returning from public worſhip, we ſhould uſe means in private for the keeping up the good affections there kindled, and the preſerving the good impreſsions there made, 1 Chron. xxix. 18.

5. Thoſe who are diligent in ſearching the ſcrip-

tures, are in a fair way to improve in knowledge; for *to him that hath shall be given.*

Obſerve, though Philip had very lately been deceived in Simon Magus, and had admitted him to baptiſm, though he afterwards appeared to be no true convert, yet he did not therefore ſcruple to baptiſe the Eunuch upon his profeſſion of faith immediately, without putting him upon a longer trial than uſual. If ſome hypocrites croud into the church who afterwards prove a grief and ſcandal to us, yet we muſt not therefore make the door of admiſſion any ſtraiter than Chriſt has made it: they ſhall anſwer for their apoſtacy, and not we.

CHAP. IX.

Ver. 1—9. We found mention made of Saul twice or thrice in the ſtory of Stephen, for the ſacred penman even longed to come to his ſtory, and now we are come to it. His name in Hebrew was Saul, *desired*, though as remarkably little in ſtature as his nameſake king Saul was tall and ſtately. One of the ancients calls him *Homo tricubitalis*, but four foot and a half in height. His Roman name, which he went by among the citizens of Rome, was Paul, *little*. He was born in Tarſus, a city of Cilicia, a free city of the Romans, and himſelf a freeman of that city. His father and mother were both native Jews, therefore he calls himſelf *a Hebrew of the Hebrews*. He was of the tribe of Benjamin, which

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adhered to Judah. His education was in the ſchools of Tarſus firſt, which was a little Athens for learning. There he acquainted himſelf with the philoſophy and poetry of the Greeks. Thence he was ſent to the univerſity at Jeruſalem, to ſtudy divinity and the Jewiſh law. His tutor was Gamaliel, an eminent Phariſee. He had extraordinary natural parts, and improved mightily in learning. He had likewiſe a handicraft trade, was bred to tent-making, which was common among the Jews who were bred ſcholars (as Dr. Lightfoot ſaith) for the earning of their maintenance, and the avoiding of idleneſs.

Saul was on his journey, wickedly purſuing his perſecuting deſigns againſt the chriſtians at Damaſcus, and pleaſing himſelf with the thought that he ſhould devour this new-born child of chriſtianity there, when the Lord met with him by his converting grace.

Note, Sometimes the grace of God works upon ſinners when they are at the worſt, and hotly engaged in the moſt deſperate ſinful purſuits; which is much for the glory both of God's pity and of his power.

Thoſe who perſecute the ſaints, perſecute Chriſt himſelf; and he takes what is done againſt them as done againſt himſelf, and accordingly will be the judgment in the great day, Mat. 25—45.

Ver. 10—22. Chriſt very well knows where to find out thoſe who are his in their diſtreſſes. When their relations, it may be, know not what is become

of them, they have a friend in heaven who knows in what ſtreet, in what houſe, nay and which is more, in what frame they are. He knows their ſouls in adverſity.

Regenerating grace evermore ſets people on praying. You may as ſoon find a living man without breath, as a living chriſtian without prayer. If breathleſs, lifeleſs; and ſo if prayerleſs, graceleſs.

Ver. 23—31. Saul was no ſooner a chriſtian but a preacher; no ſooner a preacher but a ſufferer. So quick did he riſe to the top of his preferment!

Note, when God gives great grace he commonly exerciſes it with great trials.

Ver. 36—43. Tabitha was *full of good works*, as a tree that is full of fruit. Many are full of good words who are empty and barren in good works, but Tabitha was a great doer, no great talker; *non magna loquimur sed vivimus*. Among other good works, ſhe was remarkable for the *almsdeeds which she did:* not only her works of piety, which are good works and the fruits of faith, but works of charity and beneficence, flowing from love to our neighbour, and a holy contempt of this world.

Obſerve, She is praiſed not only for the alms which ſhe gave, but for the alms-deeds which ſhe did. Thoſe who have not eſtates wherewith to give in charity, may yet be able to *do in charity, working with their hands*, or walking with their feet; for the benefit of the poor. And they who will not *do* a

charitable deed, whatever they may pretend, if they were rich would not *bestow* a charitable gift.

Obſerve, What a grateful ſenſe the poor widows had of the kindneſs of Tabitha towards them. They *shewed the coats*, not aſhamed to own that they were indebted to her for the clothes on their backs.

Thoſe are horribly ungrateful indeed, who have kindneſs ſhewn them, and will not make at leaſt an acknowledgment of it, by ſhewing the kindneſs that is done them, as theſe widows here did. They who receive alms are not obliged ſo induſtriouſly to conceal it, as thoſe are who give alms. When the poor reflect upon the rich as uncharitable and unmerciful, they ought to reflect upon themſelves, and conſider whether they are not unthankful and ungrateful.

CHAP. X.

It is a turn very new and remarkable, which the ſtory of this chapter gives to the Acts of the Apoſtles. Hitherto, both at Jeruſalem and every where elſe where the miniſters of Chriſt came, they preached only to the Jews, or thoſe Greeks who were circumciſed and proſelyted to the Jews' religion; but now, Lo, we turn to the Gentiles, and to them the door of faith is here opened. Good news indeed to us ſinners of the Gentiles! The apoſtle Peter is the man who is firſt employed to admit uncircumciſed Gentiles into the chriſtian church; and Cornelius,

a Roman centurian or colonel, is the first who with his family and friends are so admitted.

Ver. 1—8. Let not soldiers and officers of the army plead that their employment frees them from the restraints which some others are under, and giving them an opportunity of living more at large, may excuse them if they be not religious; for here was an officer of the army who embraced christianity, and yet was neither turned out of his place, nor turned himself out.

Observe, A devout centurion had devout soldiers. A little devotion commonly goes a great way with soldiers, but there would be more of it in the soldiers, if there were but more of it in the commanders. Officers in an army who have such a great power over the soldiers, as we find the centurion had, Mat. viii. 9. have a great opportunity of promoting religion, at least of restraining vice and profaneness in those under their command, if they would but improve it.

Observe, When this centurion was to chuse some of his soldiers to attend his person and to be always about him, he pitched upon those of them as were devout. They shall be preferred and countenanced, to encourage others to be so. He went by David's rule, Psalm ci. 6. *Mine eye shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me.*

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CHAP. XI.

Ver. 1—18. It is a debt we owe both to ourſelves and our brethren, to ſet thoſe actions of ours in a true light which at firſt looked ill and gave offence, that we may remove ſtumbling-blocks out of our brethren's way.

It was not till after the flood, as it ſhould ſeem, that man was allowed to eat fleſh at all, Gen. ix. 3. That allowance was afterwards limited by the ceremonial law; but now the reſtrictions were taken off, and the matter ſet at large again. It was not the deſign of Chriſt to abridge us in the uſe of our creature comforts by any other law than that of ſobriety and temperance, and preferring the meat that endures to eternal life before that which periſheth.

See how good it is for thoſe who have communion with God, and keep up a correſpondence with heaven, to compare notes, and communicate their experiences to each other; for hereby they may ſtrengthen one another's faith. Peter is more confirmed in the truth of his viſion by Cornelius's, and Cornelius by Peter's.

Note, 1. Repentance, if it be true, is unto life; it is to ſpiritual life. All who truly repent of their ſins, evidence it by living a new life, a holy, heavenly and divine life. Thoſe who by repentance die unto ſin, from thence forward live unto God; and then, and not till then, we begin to live indeed; and it

ſhall be to eternal life. All true penitents ſhall live, i. e. they ſhall be reſtored to the favour of God, which is life, which is better than life. They ſhall be comforted with the aſſurance of the pardon of their ſins, and ſhall have the earneſt of eternal life, and at length the fruition of it.

2. Repentance is God's gift. It is not only his free grace that accepts it, but his mighty grace that works it in us; *that takes away the heart of ſtone, and gives us a heart of flesh.*

3. Wherever God deſigns to give life, he gives repentance; for that is a neceſſary preparative for the comforts of a ſealed pardon, and a ſettled peace in this world, and for the ſeeing and enjoying of God in the other world.

4. It is a great comfort to us that God hath exalted his Son Jeſus, not only to give repentance to Iſrael, and the remiſſion of ſins, Acts v. 31. but to *the Gentiles also.*

Ver. 19—26. Where the grace of God is it will be *seen*, as *the tree is known by its fruits*; and where it is ſeen it ought to be owned. What we ſee which is good in any, we muſt call it God's grace in them, and give that grace the glory of it; and we ought ourſelves to take the comfort of it, and make it the matter of our rejoicing. We muſt be glad *to see the grace of God in others*, and the more when we ſee it where we did not expect it.

The diſciples, by taking on themſelves the name of chriſtians, laid upon themſelves and all who ſhould

ever profeſs that name, a ſtrong and laſting obligation to ſubmit to the laws of Chriſt, to follow the example of Chriſt, and to devote themſelves entirely to the honour of Chriſt; *to be to him for a name and a praise.* Are we chriſtians? then we ought to think and ſpeak, and act in every thing as becometh chriſtians, and to do nothing to the reproach of that worthy name by which we are called; that *that* may not be ſaid to us, which Alexander ſaid to a ſoldier of his own name who was noted for a coward, *Aut nomen, aut mores muta;* Either change thy name, or mend thy manners And as we muſt look upon ourſelves as chriſtians, and carry ourſelves accordingly, ſo we muſt look upon others as chriſtians, and carry ourſelves towards them accordingly. A chriſtian, though not in every thing of our mind, ſhould be loved and reſpected for his ſake whoſe name he bears, becauſe he belongs to Chriſt.

CHAP. XII.

Ver. 5—19. Though the death and ſufferings of Chriſt's miniſters may be made greatly to ſerve the intereſts of Chriſt's kingdom, yet it is the duty and concern of the church, earneſtly to pray for their life, liberty and tranquillity; and ſometimes Providence orders it, that they are brought into imminent danger, to ſtir up prayer for them.

God's time to help is when things are brought to the laſt extremity. When Iſaac is bound upon *the*

altar, and the knife in the hand, and the hand stretched out to slay him, then *Jehovah-jireh*, the Lord will provide.

Wherever the people of God are, and however ſurrounded, they have a way open heaven-ward, nor can any thing intercept their intercourſe with God.

When God will work ſalvation for his people, no difficulties in their way are inſuperable: but even gates of iron are made to open of their own accord.

This deliverance of Peter repreſents to us our redemption by Chriſt, which is often ſpoken of as the *ſetting of priſoners free*, not only the proclaiming of liberty to the captives, but the *bringing them out of the priſon-houſe*. The application of the redemption in the converſion of ſouls, is the *ſending forth of the priſoners, by the blood of the covenant, out of the pit wherein is no water*, Zech. ix. 11. The grace of God, like this angel of the Lord, brings light firſt into the priſon, by the opening of the underſtanding; ſmites the ſleeping ſinner on the ſide, by the awakening of the conſcience; cauſeth the chains to fall off from the hands, by the renewing of the will; and then gives the word of command, *gird thyſelf and follow me*. Difficulties are to be paſſed through, and the oppoſition of Satan and his inſtruments, *a firſt and ſecond ward, an untoward generation*, from which we are concerned to *ſave ourſelves*; and ſhall be ſaved by the grace of God, if we put ourſelves under the divine conduct. And at length the iron gate ſhall be opened to us to enter into

the new Jeruſalem, where we ſhall be perfectly freed from all the marks of our captivity, and brought into the *glorious liberty of the children of God.*

Peter, when he recollected himſelf, *perceived of a truth* what great things God had done for him, which at firſt he could not believe for joy. Thus ſouls who are delivered out of a ſpiritual bondage, are not at firſt aware what God has wrought in them: many have the truth of grace who want the evidence of it. They are queſtioning, whether there be indeed this change wrought in them, or whether they have not been all this while in a dream? *But when the Comforter comes, whom the Father will send,* ſooner or later he will let them know *of a ſurety* what a bleſſed change is wrought in them, and what a happy ſtate they are brought into.

Peter came to the houſe where the people were uniting together in prayer for him, when they were thus employed, which was an immediate preſent anſwer to their prayer. It was as if God ſhould ſay, you are praying that Peter may be reſtored to you; now here he is. *While they are yet speaking, I will hear,* Iſa. lxv. 24. Thus the angel was ſent with an anſwer of peace to Daniel's prayer, *while he was praying,* Dan. ix. 20. *Ask and it shall be given.*

CHAP. XIII.

Ver. 4—13. Saul is here for the first time called Paul, and never after Saul. Saul was his name, as he was *a Hebrew, and of the tribe of Benjamin*; Paul was his name as he was a citizen of Rome. Hitherto we have had him mostly conversant among the Jews, and therefore called by his Jewish name; but now when he is sent forth among the Gentiles, he is called by his Roman name, to put somewhat of a reputation upon him in the Roman cities; Paulus being a very common name among them. But, some think, he was never called Paul till now, that he was instrumental in the conversion of *Sergius Paulus* to the faith of Christ, and that he took that name, Paulus, as a memorial of that victory obtained by the gospel of Jesus Christ; as among the Romans, he that had conquered a country took his denomination from it, as *Germanicus*, *Britannicus*, *Africanus*; or rather *Sergius Paulus* himself gave him the name *Paulus* in token of his favour and respect to him, as Vespasian gave his name *Flavius* to Josephus the Jew.

A fulness of subtilty and mischief together, make a man indeed a child of the devil.

The doctrine of Christ has a great deal in it that is astonishing; and the more we know of it, the more reason we shall see to wonder and stand amazed at it.

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Ver. 14—41. Note, 1. The great concern of ſinners is to be juſtified, to be acquitted from guilt, and accepted as righteous in God's ſight.

2. Thoſe are truly juſtified from all their guilt; for if any be left charged upon the ſinner, he is undone.

3. It was impoſſible for a ſinner to be juſtified by the law of Moſes: not by his moral law, for we have all broke it, and are tranſgreſſing it daily, ſo that inſtead of juſtifying us, it condems us; not by his remedial law, for it was not poſſible that the *blood of bulls and goats should take away sin,* ſhould ſatisfy God's offended juſtice, or pacify the ſinner's wounded conſcience. It was but a ritual and typical inſtitution, See Heb. ix. 4.—x. 1, 4.

4. By Jeſus Chriſt we obtain a complete juſtification, for by him a complete atonement was made for ſin. We are juſtified not only by him as our judge, but by him as our righteouſneſs, *the Lord our Righteousness.*

5. All who *believe* in Chriſt, who rely upon him, and give up themſelves to be ruled by him, are juſtified by him, and none but they.

6. What the law *could not do* for us, *in that it was weak,* that the goſpel of Chriſt doth; and therefore it was folly, out of a jealouſy for the law of Moſes, and the honour of that, to conceive a jealouſy of the goſpel of Chriſt and the deſigns of that.

CHAP. XIV.

Ver. 1—7. As "the blood of martyrs has been the ſeed of the church," ſo the baniſhment of the confeſſors has helped to ſcatter that ſeed.

Ver. 8—18. We do not find that Paul and Barnabas rent their clothes when the people vilified them, and ſpake of ſtoning them; they could bear that without diſturbance: but when they deified them, and ſpake of worſhipping them, they could not bear it, but rent their clothes, as being more concerned for God's honour their own.

We muſt thank God not only for our food, but for our gladneſs; that he gives us leave to be chearful, cauſe to be chearful, and hearts to be chearful: and if our hearts *be filled with food and gladness,* they ought to be filled with love and thankfulneſs, and enlarged in duty and obedience, Deut. viii. 10.—xxviii. 47.

Ver. 19—28. See how fickle and mutable the minds of carnal, worldly people are! Thoſe who but the other day would have treated the apoſtles as more than men, now treat them as worſe than brutes, as the worſt of men, as the worſt of malefactors. To-day *hosanna*, to-morrow, *crucify*; to-day ſacrificed to, to-morrow ſacrificed: as we have an inſtance of a change the other way, Acts xxviii. *This man is a murderer,* ver. 4. no doubt *he is a god*, ver. vi.

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Popular breath turns like the wind. If Paul would have been Mercury, he might have been enthroned, nay he might have been inſhrined; but if he will be a faithful miniſter of Chriſt, he ſhall be ſtoned, and thrown out of the city.

God's faithful ſervants, though they may be brought within a ſtep of death, and may be looked upon as dead both by friends and enemies, ſhall not die as long as he has work for them to do. *They are cast down but not destroyed*, 2 Cor. iv. 9.

Note, 1. Thoſe who are converted need to be *informed*, who are planted need to be rooted. Miniſters' work is to eſtabliſh ſaints, as well as to awaken ſinners. Thoſe who were inſtructed in the truth, muſt know the *certainty* of the things in which they have been inſtructed.

2. True confirmation is confirmation of the ſoul. It is not binding the body by ſevere penalties on apoſtates, but binding the ſoul. The beſt miniſters can do that only by preſſing thoſe things which are proper to bind the ſoul: it is the grace of God, and nothing leſs, that can effectually *confirm the souls of the disciples*, and prevent their apoſtacy.

CHAP. XV.

Hitherto we have, with a great deal of pleaſure, attended the apoſtles in their glorious travels for *propagating the gospel in foreign parts*; have ſeen the bounds of the church enlarged by the acceſſion

both of Jews and Gentiles to it; and thanks be to God, who always causeth them to triumph! We left them in the close of the foregoing chapter reposing themselves at Antioch, and edifying the church there with the rehearsal of their experiences, and it is a pity they should ever beotherwise employed; but in this chapter we find other work, nothing nigh so pleasant, cut out for them. The christians and ministers are engaged in controversy, and they that should have been now busied in enlarging the dominions of the church, have as much as they can do, to compose the divisions of it. When they should have been making war upon the devil's kingdom, they have much ado to keep the peace in Christ's kingdom. Yet that occurrence and the record of it is of great use to the church, both for warning us to expect such unhappy discords among christians, and direction to us what method to take for the accommodation of them.

Ver. 6—21. Note, 1. *By faith the heart is purified.* We are not only justified, but the work of sanctification is begun and carried on.

2. Those who have their hearts purified by faith, therein are made to resemble one another, that whatever other difference there may be between them, no account is to be made of it; for the faith of all the saints is alike precious, and has like precious effects, 2 Pet. i. 1. and they that by it are united to Christ, are so to look upon themselves as joined to one another, as that all distinctions, even that between Jew

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and Gentiles, are immerſed and ſwallowed up in it.

Ver. 36—41. Thoſe who have preached the goſpel ſhould viſit thoſe to whom they have preached it. As we muſt look after our praying, and hear what anſwer God gives to that; ſo we muſt look after our preaching, and ſee what ſucceſs that has. Faithful miniſters cannot but have a particular tender concern for thoſe to whom they have preached the goſpel, that they may not beſtow upon them labour in vain. See 1 Theſſ. iii. 5, 6.

We have here an account of a diſagreement between Paul and Barnabas about an aſſiſtant. Barnabas would have his nephew John, whoſe ſurname was Mark, to go along with him, which Paul oppoſed. I doubt there was, (as uſually there is in ſuch contentions) *a fault on both sides.* We muſt own it was their infirmity, and is recorded for our admonition; not that we muſt make uſe of it to excuſe our own intemperate heats and paſsions, or to rebate the edge of our ſorrow and ſhame for them. We muſt not ſay, What! If I was in a paſsion; were not Paul and Barnabas ſo? No; but it muſt check our cenſures of others and moderate them. If good men are ſoon put into a paſsion, we muſt make the beſt of it; it was the infirmity once of two of the beſt men that ever the world had! Repentance teaches us to be ſevere in reflections upon ourſelves; but charity teaches us to be candid in our reflection upon others. It is only Chriſt's example that is a copy without a blot.

Paul afterwards ſeemed to have had upon farther trial, a better opinion of John Mark than now he had; for he writes to Timothy, 2 Tim. iv. 11. *Take Mark and bring him with thee, for he is profitable to me for the ministry;* and writes to the Coloſsians concerning Marcus ſiſter's ſon to Barnabas, that *if he came to them* they ſhould *receive him*, bid him welcome, and employ him, Col. iv. 10. Which teaches us,

1. That even thoſe whom we juſtly condemned, yet we ſhould do it moderately, and with a great deal of temper, becauſe we know not but afterwards we may ſee cauſe to think better of them, and both to make uſe of them and make friendſhip with them, and we ſhould ſo regulate our reſentments, as that if it ſhould prove ſo, we may not afterwards be aſhamed of them.

2. That even thoſe whom we have juſtly condemned, if afterwards they prove more faithful, we ſhould chearfully receive, forgive and forget, and put a confidence in, and, as there is occaſion, give a good word to.

CHAP. XVI.

It is ſome rebuke to Barnabas that after he left Paul we hear no more of him, of what he did or ſuffered for Chriſt; but Paul as he was *recommended by the brethren to the grace of God*, ſo his ſervices for Chriſt after this are largely recorded.

Ver. 6—15. Lydia was *a seller of purple*, either of purple dye or of purple cloth or ſilk.

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Obſerve, 1. She had a calling, an honeſt calling, which the hiſtorian takes notice of to her praiſe. She was none of thoſe women that the apoſtle ſpeaks of, 1 Tim. 5, 13. *who learn to be idle*, &c.

2. It was a mean calling, ſhe was *a ſeller of purple*, not a wearer of purple, few ſuch are called. The notice taken of this here is an intimation to thoſe who are employed in honeſt callings, if they be honeſt in the management of them, not to be aſhamed of them.

3. Though ſhe had a calling to mind, yet ſhe was a worſhipper of God, and found time to improve advantages for her ſoul. The buſineſs of our particular callings may be made to conſiſt very well with the buſineſs of religon, and therefore it will not excuſe us from religious exerciſes alone, and in our families, or in ſolemn aſſemblies, to ſay we have ſhops to look after, and a trade to mind; for have we not alſo a God to ſerve, and a ſoul to look after? Religion doth not call us from our buſineſs in the world, but directs us in it. Every thing in its time and place.

The Lord opened Lydia's heart. Obſerve here, 1. The author of this work: it was the Lord. Converſion work is God's work. The ſalvation of them that are ſaved muſt be wholly aſcribed to him, though he is not in the leaſt chargeable with the ruin of them that periſh.

2. The ſeat of this work: it is in the heart that the change is made, it is to the heart that this bleſſed

turn is given. It was *the heart of Lydia* that was wrought upon. Converſion work is *heart-work*, it is *a renewing of the heart, the inward man, the spirit of the mind.*

3. The nature of the work: ſhe had not only her heart touched, but her *heart opened.* An unconverted ſoul is *shut up* and fortified againſt Chriſt, *straightly shut up*, as Jericho againſt Joſhua, Joſhua vi. 1. Chriſt in dealing with the ſoul, *knocks at the door that is shut against him*, Rev. iii. 20. and when a ſinner is effectually perſuaded to embrace Chriſt, *then the heart is open for the King of glory to come in;* the underſtanding is opened to receive the divine light, the will opened to receive the divine law, and the affections opened to receive the divine love: and when the heart is thus opened to Chriſt, the ear is opened to his word, the lips opened in prayer, the hand opened in charity, and the ſteps enlarged in all manner of goſpel-obedience.

When Lydia's heart was open to Chriſt, her houſe was open to his miniſters for his ſake, and they were welcome to the beſt entertainment ſhe had, which ſhe did not think too good for thoſe of whoſe ſpiritual things ſhe had reaped ſo plentifully.

Ver. 25—34. The ſerious inquiry of the jailor is, *What must I do to be saved?* His ſalvation is now his great concern, and lies neareſt his heart, though before it was the fartheſt thing from his thoughts.

The reply of the apoſtles, to the jailor's inquiry is, *believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt*

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be saved. There is no other way of ſalvation but *by Christ*, and no other way of our being ſaved by Chriſt, but by *believing in him*; and no danger of coming ſhort, if we take this way; for it is the way that God has appointed, and he is faithful that has promiſed. It is the goſpel that is to be preached to every creature, *He that believes shall be saved.*

CHAP. XVII.

Ver. 1—9. *Sabbaths and solemn assemblies* are always very precious to thoſe to whom Chriſt is precious, Pſalm lxxxiv. 10. It is good being in the houſe of the Lord on his day. This was Chriſt's manner, and Paul's manner, and has been the manner of all the ſaints, the *good old way* which they have *walked in.*

The preaching of the goſpel ſhould be both ſcriptural preaching and rational: ſuch Paul's was, for he *reasoned out of the scriptures.* We muſt take the ſcriptures for our foundation, our oracle and touchſtone, and then reaſon out of them and upon them, and againſt thoſe, who, though they pretend zeal for the ſcriptures as the Jews did, yet wreſt them to their own deſtruction. Reaſon muſt not be ſet up in competition with the ſcripture, but it muſt be made uſe of in explaining and applying the ſcripture.

It is the honour of religion that thoſe who hate it are generally *the lewd fellows of the baser sort*, who are loſt to all ſenſe of juſtice and virtue.

Ver. 10—15. Obſerve, 1, The doctrine of Chriſt doth not fear a ſcrutiny. We who are advocates for his cauſe, deſire no more but that people will not ſay *these things are not so*, till they have firſt, without prejudice and partiality, examined *whether they be so* or no.

2. The New Teſtament is to be examined by the Old. The Jews received the Old Teſtament, and thoſe who did ſo, if they conſidered things aright, could not but ſee cauſe ſufficient to receive the New, becauſe in it they ſee all the prophecies and promiſes of the Old fully and exactly accompliſhed.

3. Thoſe who read and receive *the scriptures* muſt *search them*, John v. 39. muſt ſtudy them, and on all occaſions take pains in conſidering them, both that they may find out the truth contained in them, and may not miſtake the ſenſe of them, and ſo run into error, or remain in it; and that they may find out the whole truth contained in them, and may not reſt in a ſuperficial knowledge, in the outward court of the ſcriptures, but may have an intimate acquaintance with the mind of God revealed in them.

4. Searching the ſcriptures muſt be our daily work. They that heard *the word in the synagogue on the sabbath day*, did not think that enough, but were ſearching it every day in the week that they might improve what they had heard the ſabbath before, and prepare for what they were to hear the ſabbath after.

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5. Thoſe are truly *noble*, and are in a fair way to be more and more ſo, who make the ſcriptures their oracle and touch-ſtone, and conſult them accordingly. Thoſe who rightly ſtudy the ſcriptures, and *meditate therein day and night*, have their minds filled with noble thoughts, fixed to noble principles, and formed for noble aims and deſigns. *These are more noble.*

CHAP. XVIII.

Ver. 24—28. 1. Aquila and Priſcilla heard Apollos preach in the ſynagogue. Though in knowledge he was much inferior to them; yet having excellent gifts for public ſervice, they encouraged his miniſtry, by a diligent and conſtant attendance upon it. Thus young miniſters, who are hopeful, ſhould be countenanced by grown chriſtians.

2. Finding him defective in the knowledge of chriſtianity, *they took him to them*, to lodge in the ſame houſe with them, and *expounded to him the way of God*, the way of ſalvation by Jeſus Chriſt, *more perfectly*. They did not take occaſion from what they obſerved of his deficiency either to deſpiſe him themſelves, or to diſparage him to others; did not call him a young raw preacher, not fit to come into a pulpit, but conſidered the diſadvantages he had laboured under; and having themſelves got great knowledge in the truths of the goſpel by their

long and intimate converſation with Paul, they communicated what they knew to him, and gave him a clear, diſtinct, and methodical account of thoſe things which before he had but confuſed notions of.

1. See here an inſtance of that which Chriſt has promiſed, that *to him that hath, shall be given*; he that has, and uſes what he has, ſhall have more. He that diligently traded with the talent he had, doubled it quickly.

2. See an inſtance of truly chriſtian charity in Aquila and Priſcilla; they did good according to their ability. Aquila, though a man of great knowledge, yet did not undertake to ſpeak in the ſynagogue, becauſe he had not ſuch gifts for public work as Apollos had; but he furniſhed Apollos with matter, and then left him to clothe it with acceptable words. Inſtructing young chriſtians and young miniſters privately in converſation, who mean well, and perform well, as far as they go, is a piece of very good ſervice, both to them and to the church.

3. See an inſtance of great humility in Apollos. He was a very bright young man, of great parts and learning, newly come from the univerſity, a popular preacher, and one mightily cried up and followed; and yet finding that Aquila and Priſcilla were judicious, ſerious chriſtians, who could ſpeak intelligently and experimentally of the things of God; though they were but mechanics, poor tent-makers, he was glad to receive inſtruction from them, to be

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ſhewed by them his defects and miſtakes, and to have his miſtakes rectified by them, and his deficiencies made up. Young ſcholars may gain a great deal by converſe with old chriſtians, as young ſtudents in the law may by old practiſers. Apollos, though he *was instructed in the way of the Lord*, did not reſt in the knowledge he had attained, nor thought he underſtood Chriſtianity as well as any man, which proud conceited young men are apt to do, but was willing to have it *expounded to him more perfectly*.

They who know much ſhould covet to know more, and what they know to know better, preſſing forwards towards perfection.

4. Here is an inſtance of a good woman though not permitted to ſpeak in the church or in the ſynagogue, yet doing good with the knowledge God had given her in private converſe. Paul will have the *aged women to be teachers of good things*, Tit. ii. 3, 4.

CHAP. XIX.

Ver. 1—7. It concerns us all who profeſs the chriſtian faith, ſeriouſly to inquire whether we have received the Holy Ghoſt or not. The Holy Ghoſt is promiſed to all believers, to all petitioners, Luke xi. 13. but many are deceived in this matter, who think they have received the Holy Ghoſt when really

they have not. As there are pretenders to the gifts of the Holy Ghoſt, ſo there are to his graces and comforts: we ſhould therefore ſtrictly examine ourſelves, *Have we received the Holy Ghost?* The tree will be known by its fruits. Do we bring forth the fruits of the Spirit? Are we led by the Spirit? Do we walk in the Spirit? Are we under the government of the Spirit?

Obſerve, How Paul preached to the people.

1. He preached argumentatively. He diſputed; gave reaſons, ſcripture reaſons for what he preached; and anſwered objections, for the convincing of men's judgments and conſciences, that they might not only believe, but might ſee cauſe to believe.

2. He preached affectionately. He perſuaded. He uſed not only logical arguments, to enforce what he ſaid upon their underſtandings; but rhetorical motives to impreſs what he ſaid upon their affections.

3. He preached undauntedly, and with a holy reſolution. He ſpake boldly, as one who had not the leaſt doubt of the things he ſpoke of, nor the leaſt diſtruſt of him he ſpoke from, nor the leaſt dread of them he ſpoke to.

Ver. 21—41. It is natural for men to be jealous for that, whether right or wrong, by which they get their *wealth*: and many have, for this reaſon alone, ſet themſelves againſt the goſpel of Chriſt, becauſe it calls men off from thoſe crafts which are unlaw-

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ful, how much wealth ſoever is to be gotten by them.

CHAP. XX.

Ver. 17—35. Paul preached *repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ.* We muſt by repentance look towards God as *our end;* and by faith towards Chriſt as *our way* to God. Sin muſt by repentance be abandoned and forſaken, and then Chriſt muſt by faith be relied on for the pardon of ſin. There is no coming to God, as penitent prodigals to a Father, but in the ſtrength and righteouſneſs of Jeſus Chriſt as Mediator.

Thoſe who have their *conversation in heaven*, can look down, not only upon the common troubles of this earth, but upon the threatening rage and malice of hell itſelf, and ſay, that *none of these things move them*, as knowing that none of theſe things can hurt them. Miniſters, in preaching the word of grace, muſt aim at their own edification, as well as the edification of others. The moſt grown chriſtians, while they are in this world, are capable of growing, and they will find the word of grace to have ſtill more and more in it to contribute to their growth. It is ſtill *able to build them up.*

Note, 1. Heaven is an inheritance which gives an indefeaſible right to all the heirs. It is an inheritance like that of the Iſraelites at Canaan, which was *by promise* and *yet by lot*, but was *sure to all the seed.*

2. This inheritance is intailed upon and ſecured to all thoſe, and thoſe only, who are ſanctified; for as thoſe cannot be welcome gueſts to the holy God, or the holy ſociety above, who are unſanctified; ſo really heaven would be no heaven to them; but *to all who are sanctified, who are born again*, and on whom *the image of God is renewed*, it is as ſure as almighty power and eternal truth can make it: but we cannot expect to be among the glorified hereafter, unleſs we be among the ſanctified here. We muſt labour in an honeſt employment, not only that we may be able to *live*, but that we may be able *to give*.

CHAP. XXI.

We have, with a great deal of pleaſure, attended the apoſtle in his travels throughout the Gentile nations to preach the goſpel, and have ſeen a great harveſt of ſouls gathered in to Chriſt. There we have ſeen likewiſe what perſecutions he endured; yet ſtill *out of them all the Lord presently* delivered him, 2 Tim. iii. 11. But now we are to attend him to Jeruſalem, and there into laſting bonds. The days of his ſervice now ſeem to be over, and nothing to remain but days of ſuffering, days of darkneſs, for they are many. It is a thouſand pities that ſuch a workman ſhould be laid aſide; yet ſo it is, and we muſt not only acquieſce, as his friends then did, ſaying, *The will of the Lord be done;* but we muſt be-

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lieve, and ſhall find reaſon to do ſo, that Paul in the priſon, and at the bar, is as truly glorifying God, and ſerving Chriſt's intereſt, as Paul in the pulpit was.

Ver. 1—7. *At Tyre Paul found disciples.* Obſerve, wherever he came, he inquired what diſciples were there, found them out, and aſſociated with them; for we know what is the uſage of birds of a feather.

Paul, *finding those disciples at Tyre, tarried there seven days*, that he might be ſure to ſpend one Lord's day with them, and ſo might have an opportunity of preaching publicly among them; for it is the deſire of good men to do good wherever they come; and where we find diſciples, we may either benefit them, or be benefited by them.

The disciples of Tyre, though they were none of Paul's converts, yet ſhewed a very great reſpect to Paul, whoſe uſefulneſs in the church they had heard ſo much of. When *he departed from Tyre*, though they had had but ſeven days acquaintance with him, yet as if he had been ſome great man, *they all came together with* their wives and children, ſolemnly to take leave of him, to beg his bleſſing, and to bring him as far on his way as the ſea would permit them.

Note, 1. We ſhould pay reſpect, not only to our own miniſters, *who are over us in the Lord, and admonish us, and, for their work's sake* among us, *esteem them highly in love*, but we muſt, as there is occaſion, teſtify our love and reſpect to all the faith-

ful miniſters of Chriſt, both for his ſake whoſe miniſters they are, *and for their work's sake* among others.

2. We muſt, in a particular manner, honour thoſe whom God hath ſingularly honoured by making them eminently uſeful in their generation.

3. It is good to train up people in a reſpect to good people and good miniſters. This was particularly remarkable *at Tyre*, which we have not met with any where elſe, *that they brought their wives and children to attend Paul*, to do him the more honour, and to receive benefit by his inſtructions and prayers; and, as angry notice was taken of the children of the idolators of Bethel who mocked a prophet, ſo no doubt gracious notice was taken *of the children of the disciples at Tyre*, who honoured an apoſtle, as Chriſt accepted *the hosannas of the little children*.

4. We ſhould be good husbands of our opportunities, and make the utmoſt we can of them for the good of our ſouls. *They brought Paul on his way*, that they might have ſo much the more of his company and his prayers.

Ver. 15—26. It is an honourable thing to be an *old disciple* of Jeſus Chriſt, to have been enabled by the grace of God to continue long in a courſe of duty, ſtedfaſt in the faith, and growing more and more prudent and experienced to a good old age: and with theſe old diſciples one would chuſe to

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lodge; for the *multitude of their years shall teach wisdom.*

Ver. 27—40. We have here Paul brought into a captivity which we are not likely to ſee the end of; for after this he is either hurried from one bar to another, or lies neglected, firſt in one priſon, and then in another, and can neither be tried nor bailed. When we ſee the beginning of a trouble, we know not either how long it will laſt, or how it will iſſue.

CHAP. XXII.

Ver. 1—2. Though we muſt not give flattering titles to any, yet we ought to give titles of due reſpect to all; and thoſe we would do good to, we ſhould endeavour not to provoke.

Ver. 3—21. Paul's petition for a warrant to preach the goſpel at Jeruſalem is over-ruled, and he has poſitive orders to *go among the Gentiles.* Note, God often gives gracious anſwers to his people's prayers, not in the thing itſelf that they pray for, but in ſomething better. Paul here prays that he may be an inſtrument of converting ſouls at Jeruſalem: no, ſaith Chriſt, but thou ſhalt be employed among the Gentiles, and *more shall be the children of the desolate than those of the married wife.* It is God who appoints his labourers both their day and their place, and it is fit they ſhould acquieſce in his appointment,

though it may croſs their own inclinations. Paul hankers after Jeruſalem. To be a preacher there was the top of his ambition; but Chriſt deſigns him greater preferments. He ſhall not enter into other men's labours as the other apoſtles did, John iv. 38. but ſhall break up new ground, and *preach the goſpel there where Christ was not named*, Rom xv. 20. So often doth Providence contrive better for us than we for ourſelves: to the conduct of that we muſt therefore refer ourſelves. *He shall chuse our inheritance for us.*

Obſerve, Paul ſhall not go to preach among the Gentiles, without a commiſſion, *I will send thee:* and if Chriſt ſend him, his Spirit ſhall go along with him, he will ſtand by him, will carry him on, and bear him out, and give him to ſee the fruit of his labours.

CHAP. XXIII.

Ver. 12—35. We have here the ſtory of a plot againſt the life of Paul; how it was laid, how it was diſcovered, and how it was defeated. This plot was diſcovered to Paul by means of his ſiſter's ſon, who, ſome how or other, we are not told how, had come to the knowledge of it.

Note, God has many ways of bringing *to light the hidden works of darkness.* Though the contrivers of them *dig deep to hide them from the Lord*, he

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can make a bird of the air to carry the voice, Eccles. x. 20. or the conſpirators' own tongues to betray themſelves.

The centurion very readily co-operated with his ſiſter's ſon, for Paul's preſervation from the plot that had been laid to take away his life.

Note, It is true charity to poor priſoners to act for them, as well as to give to them. *I was sick and in prison*, and you went on an errand for me, will paſs as well in the account, as *I was sick, and in prison, and you came unto me to visit me*, or ſent me a token. Thoſe who have acquaintance and intereſt, ſhould be ready to uſe it, for the aſſiſtance of thoſe who are in diſtreſs. This *centurion* helped to ſave Paul's life by this piece of civility, which ſhould engage us to be ready to do the like when there is occaſion.

Paul was ſecured from this plot, by being given over to the Roman governor, by the chief captain. He had never affected acquaintance or ſociety with great men, but with the diſciples wherever he came; yet Providence over-rules his ſufferings ſo as by them to give him an opportunity of witneſſing to Chriſt before great men; and ſo Chriſt had foretold concerning his diſciples, *that they should be brought before rulers and kings, for his sake, for a testimony against them, Mark*, xiii. 9.

CHAP. XXIV.

Ver. 10—21. The consideration of the *future state* should engage us to be universally conscientious in our present state.

Ver. 22—27. Many are fond of new notions and speculations in religion, and can hear and speak of them with pleasure, who yet hate to come under the power and influence of religion; can be content to have their judgments informed, but not their lives reformed.

From this account of the heads of Paul's discourse before Felix, we may gather,

1. That Paul, in his preaching, had no respect of persons, for the word of God, which he preached, has not. He urgeth the same convictions and instructions upon *the Roman governor*, that he did upon other people.

2. That Paul in his preaching aimed at the consciences of men, and came close to them; sought not to please their fancy, or gratify their curiosity; but led them to a sight of their sins, and a sense of their duty and interest.

3. That Paul preferred the serving of Christ, and the saving of souls, before his own safety. He lay at the mercy of Felix, who had power (as Pilate said) to *crucify him*, (or which was as bad to deliver him back to the Jews) and *he had power to release him*.

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Now when Paul had his ear, and had him in a good humour, he had a fair opportunity of ingratiating himſelf with him, and obtaining a releaſe; nay, and of incenſing him againſt his perſecutors: and, on the contrary, if he diſobliged him, and put him out of humour, he may do himſelf a great unkindneſs by it; but he ſeems wholly negligent of theſe conſiderations, and is intent upon *doing good*, at leaſt diſcharging his duty.

4. That Paul was willing to take pains, and run hazards in his work, even where there was little probability of *doing good*. Felix, and Druſilla (who was another man's wife) when Felix took her to be his wife, were ſuch hardened ſinners, that it was not likely they would *be brought to repentance* by Paul's preaching, eſpecially under ſuch diſadvantages; and yet Paul deals with them as one who does not deſpair of them. *Let the watchmen give fair warning*, and then *they have delivered their own souls*, though they ſhould not prevail *to deliver the souls they watch for*.

Felix *trembled*, and that was all. Paul's *trembling*, chap. ix. 6. and *the jailor's*, chap. xvi. 13. ended in their converſion, but this of Felix did not.

There are many ſtartled by *the word of God*, who are not effectually changed by it. Many are in fear of the conſequences of ſin, and yet continue in love and league with ſin.

Felix put off this matter to *a more convenient season*, but we do not find that that *more convenient*

ſeaſon ever came; for the devil cozens us of all our time, by cozening us of our preſent time. The preſent ſeaſon is, without doubt, *the most convenient season. Behold, now is the accepted time. To-day, if ye will hear his voice.*

CHAP. XXVI.

Ver. 12—23. Great ſufferings are reconcilable to the promiſe of the deliverance of God's people, for it is not promiſed *they shall be kept from trouble*, but *kept through it;* and ſometimes God delivers them into the hands of their perſecutors, that he may have the honour of delivering them out of their hands.

Note, 1. Heaven is *an inheritance.* It deſcends to *all the children* of God; *if children, then heirs.*

2. All who are effectually turned from ſin to God, are not only pardoned, but preferred; have not only their attainder reverſed, but a patent of honour given them, and a grant of a rich *inheritance:* and the forgiveneſs of ſins makes way for this *inheritance*, by taking that out of the way which alone hindered.

3. All who ſhall be ſaved hereafter, are *sanctified* now. Thoſe who have the heavenly *inheritance*, muſt have it in this way; they muſt be prepared and made meet for it. None can be happy who are not holy; nor ſhall any be ſaints in heaven who are not firſt ſaints on earth.

4. We need no more to make us happy than to have our *lot among them that are sanctified*, to ſare

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as they fare, that is, *having our lot among the chosen*, for they are chosen to salvation through sanctification: they who are sanctified shall be glorified.

5. We are sanctified and saved *by faith in Christ*; that faith which not only receives divine revelation in general, but which in a particular manner fastens upon Jesus Christ, and his mediation; by which we rely upon Christ as *the Lord our Righteousness*, and resign ourselves to him as *the Lord our Ruler*. This is that by which we receive *the remission of sins, the gift of the Holy Ghost, and eternal life*.

Those who are employed in work for God, shall *obtain help from God*; for he will not be wanting in necessary assistances to his servants: and our continuance to this day, must be attributed *to help obtained of God*. We had sunk, if he had not borne us up; had falled off, if he had not carried us on; and it must be acknowledged with thankfulness to his praise. Paul mentions it as an evidence that he had his commission from God, that from him he had ability to execute it. The preachers of the gospel could never have done, and suffered, and prospered as they did, if they had not had immediate help from heaven, which they would not have had, if it had not been the cause of God that they were now pleading.

Ver. 24—32. Many are *almost persuaded to be* religious, who are not quite persuaded. They are under strong convictions of their duty, and of the excellency of the ways of God, but yet are over-

ruled by ſome external inducements, and do not purſue their convictions.

Paul wiſhes, that not only Agrippa, but all his auditors, *might be not only almost*—what good would that do?—*but altogether such as he was*, ſincere, thorough-paced chriſtians. He wiſhes them,

1. As well as he wiſhed his own ſoul, that they might be as happy in Chriſt as he was.

2. Better than he now was as to his outward condition, for he *excepts these bonds*. He wiſhes that they might all be comforted chriſtians as he was, but not perſecuted chriſtians as he was; that they might taſte as much as he did of the advantages which attended religion, but not ſo much of its croſſes.

CHAP. XXVII.

Ver. 12—20. Paul and his company ſaw neither ſun nor ſtars for many days. This made the tempeſt the more terrible, that they were *all in the dark*; and the uſe of the loadſtone for the directing of ſailors not being then found out, ſo that they had no guide at all when they could ſee neither ſun nor ſtars, made the caſe the more hazardous. Thus melancholy ſometimes is the condition of the people of God upon a ſpiritual account; they *walk in darkness and have no light*. Neither ſun nor ſtars appear; they cannot dwell; nay, they cannot faſten upon any thing comfortable, or encouraging. Thus it may be with them and yet *light is sown* for them.

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Any man will rather make ſhipwreck of his goods, than of his life, but many will rather make *ship-wreck of faith and a good conscience* than of their goods.

Ver. 21—44. We left theſe mariners in deſpair, giving up themſelves for gone. Whether they *called every man on his God* as Jonah's mariners did, we are not told. It is well if the laudable practice in a ſtorm was not gone out of faſhion, and made a jeſt of. However, Paul among theſe ſeamen was not like Jonah among his, the cauſe of the ſtorm, but the comforter in the ſtorm, and as much a credit to the profeſſion of an apoſtle, as Jonah was a blemiſh to his character as a prophet.

The angel which God ſent to comfort Paul could have ſingled him out from this wretched crew, and thoſe who were his friends too, and have carried them ſafe to ſhore, and have left the reſt to periſh, becauſe they would not take Paul's counſel. But God chuſeth rather, by preſerving them all for his ſake, to ſhew what great bleſſings good men are to the world, than by delivering him only to ſhew how good men are diſtinguiſhed from the world. Note, God often ſpares wicked people for the ſake of the godly; as Zoar, for Lot's ſake, and as Sodom might have been, if there had been *ten righteous persons* in it. The good people are hated and perſecuted in the world as if they were not worthy to live in it, yet really it is for their ſakes that the world ſtands.

If Paul had thrust himself needlessly into ill company; he might justly have been cast away with them, but God calling them into it, they are preserved with him. And it is intimated, that it was a great favour to Paul, and he looked upon it to be so, that others were saved for his sake; they are *given thee*. There is no greater satisfaction to a good man, than to know that he is a public blessing.

CHAP. XXVIII.

Ver. 1—10. What a great variety of places and circumstances do we find Paul in. He was a planet, and not a fixed star. Here we have him in an island, to which in all probability he had never come, if he had not been thrown upon it by a storm; and yet it seems God has work for him to do here. Even *stormy winds fulfil* God's counsel; and an ill wind indeed it is that blows nobody any good. This ill wind blew good *to the island of Melita*; for it gave them Paul's company for three months, who was a blessing to every place he came to.

These islanders changed their minds respecting Paul, after he had shook off the viper that had fastened on his hand, without receiving any harm from it, and said that he was a god, though they had before concluded that he must be a murderer. See the uncertainty of popular opinion, how it turns with the wind, and how apt it is to run into extremes both ways; from *sacrificing to Paul and Barnabas*,

to stoning them! and here, *from condemning him as a murderer, to idolising him as a god!*

Ver. 11—16. The mariners tarried at the island of Melita three months, before they left it. Paul had warned them against venturing to sea in winter weather, and they would not take the warning; but now they had learned it by the difficulties and dangers they had gone through, he needed not to warn them. Their learning did them good when they had paid dear for it. Experience is therefore called *the mistress of fools*, because they are fools that will not learn till experience has taught them.

When God doth not deliver his people presently out of bondage, yet if he either make *it easy* to them, or *them easy* under it, they have reason to be thankful.

Ver. 30, 31. During these two years of Paul's imprisonment, he wrote his *epistle to the Galatians*, then his *second epistle to Timothy*, then those *to the Ephesians, Philippians Colossians*, and *to Philemon*, in which he mentions several things particularly concerning his imprisonment; and lastly his epistle *to the Hebrews*, just after he was *set at liberty*; as Timothy also was, who, coming to visit him, was upon some account or other made his fellow-prisoner; but how or by what means he obtained his liberty, we are not told; only that *two years* he was prisoner. Tradition saith, that after his discharge he went from Italy to Spain, thence to Crete, and so

with Timothy into Judea; from thence he went to visit the churches in Asia, and at length came a second time to Rome, and there was beheaded in the last year of Nero.

Ministers' doors should be open to such as desire to receive instruction from them, and they should be glad of an opportunity to advise those who are in care about their souls.

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IF we may compare ſcripture with ſcripture, and take the opinion of ſome devout and pious perſons; in the Old Teſtament David's pſalms, and in the New Teſtament Paul's epiſtles, are ſtars of the firſt magnitude, which differ from the other ſtars in glory.

The whole ſcripture is indeed an epiſtle from heaven to earth; but in it we have upon record ſeveral particular epiſtles, more of St. Paul's than of any other; for he was the chief of the apoſtles, and laboured more abundantly than they all. His natural parts, I doubt not, were very pregnant, his apprehenſion quick and piercing, his expreſſion fluent and copious, his affections, wherever he took, very warm and zealous, and his reſolutions no leſs bold and daring. This made him, before his converſion, a very keen and bitter perſecutor; but when the ſtrong man

armed was dispossessed, and the stronger than he came to divide the spoil, and to sanctify these qualifications, he became the most skilful, zealous preacher; never any better fitted to win souls, nor more successful.

Fourteen of his epistles we have in the canon of scripture. Many more, it is probable, he wrote in the course of his ministry, which might be profitable enough for doctrine, for reproof, &c. but not being given by inspiration of God, they were not received as canonical scripture, nor handed down to us.

This epistle to the Romans is placed first, not because of the priority of its date, but because of the superlative excellency of the epistle, it being one of the longest and fullest of all, and, perhaps, because of the dignity of the place to which it was written. Chrysostom would have this epistle read over to him twice a week.

It is gathered from some passages in this epistle, that it was written *Anno Christi* 56, from Corinth, while Paul made a short stay there in his way to Troas, Acts xx. 5, 6.

The method of this (as of several other of the epistles) is observable; the former part of it is doctrinal, in the eleven first chapters; the latter part, practical in the five last; to inform the judgment,

and to reform the life: and the beſt way to underſtand the truths explained in the former part, is to abide and abound in the practice of the duties preſcribed in the latter part; for if any man will do his will, he ſhall know of the doctrine, John vii. 7.

CHAP. I.

Ver. 1—7. All good comes,

1. *From God as a Father.* He hath put himſelf into that relation, to engage and encourage our deſires and expectation. We are taught when we come for grace and peace to call him our Father.

2. *From the Lord Jesus Christ as Mediator,* and the great feoffee in truſt, for the conveying and ſecuring of thoſe benefits. We have them from his fulneſs, peace from the fulneſs of his merit, grace from the fulneſs of his Spirit.

Ver. 8—15. Fruitful chriſtians are as much the joy, as barren profeſſors are the grief of faithful miniſters.

Ver. 16—18. I reckon him a chriſtian indeed, who is neither *ashamed of the gospel,* nor a ſhame to it.

Ver. 19—32. The being of a God may be apprehended, but cannot be comprehended. We cannot by ſearching find him out, Job xi. 7, 8, 9.

Finite underſtandings cannot perfectly know an infinite being; but, bleſſed be God, there is in that which may be known, enough to lead us to our chief end, the glorifying and enjoying of him: and theſe things revealed belong to us and to our children, while ſecret things are not to be pried into, Deut. xxix. 29.

It hath been obſerved, that the moſt refined nations, which made the greateſt ſhew of wiſdom, were the arranteſt fools in religion. The barbarians adored the ſun and moon, which of all others was the moſt ſpecious idolatry; while the learned Egyptians worſhipped an ox and an onion. The Grecians, who excelled them in wiſdom, adored diſeaſes and human paſſions. The Romans, the wiſeſt of all, worſhipped the furies: and at this day the poor Americans worſhip the thunder; while the ingenious Chineſe adore the devil. Thus *the world by wisdom knew not God*, 1 Cor. i. 21. As a profeſſion of wiſdom is an aggravation of folly, ſo a proud conceit of wiſdom is the cauſe of a great deal of folly. Hence we read of few philoſophers who were converted to chriſtianity; and Paul's preaching was no where ſo laughed at and ridiculed, as among the learned Athenians, Acts xvii. 18, 32.

Our ſins are much aggravated by our concurrence with, and complacency in, the ſins of others.

CHAP. II.

Ver. 1—16. In the former chapter the apoſtle had repreſented the ſtate of the Gentile world to be as bad and black as the Jews were ready enough to pronounce it. And now deſigning to ſhew that the ſtate of the Jews was very bad too, and their ſins in many reſpects more aggravated; to prepare his way, he ſets himſelf in this part of the chapter to ſhew, that God would proceed upon equal terms of juſtice with Jews and Gentiles; and not with ſuch a partial hand, as the Jews were apt to think he would uſe in their favour.

Conſcience is a witneſs, and firſt or laſt will bear witneſs; though for a time it may be bribed, or brow-beaten.

Ver. 17—29. See how the beſt things may be perverted and abuſed. A believing, humble, thankful glorying in God, is the root and ſummary of all religion, Pſalm xxxiv. 2 Iſa. xlv. 25. 1 Cor. i. 31. But a proud, vain-glorious boaſting in God, and in the outward profeſſion of his name, is the root and ſummary of all hypocriſy. Spiritual pride is of all pride the moſt dangerous.

Examples will govern more than rules. The greateſt obſtructors of the ſucceſs of the word, are thoſe whoſe bad lives contradict their good doctrine; who in the pulpit preach ſo well, that it is pity they

ſhould ever come out; and out of the pulpit live ſo ill, that it is pity they ſhould ever come in.

CHAP. III.

Ver. 19—31. Paul doth from all this infer, that it is in vain to look for juſtification by the works of the law, and that is to be had only by faith; which is the point he hath been all along proving from chap. i. 17. and which he lays down as the ſummary of his diſcourſe, with a Q. E. D. we conclude, that *a man is justified by faith*, without the deeds of the law; neither the deeds of the firſt law of pure innocence, which left no room for repentance; nor the deeds of the law of nature, how highly ſoever improved; nor the deeds of the ceremonial law, the blood of bulls and goats could not take away ſin; nor the deeds of the moral law, which are included, for he ſpeaks of that law by which is the knowledge of ſin, and thoſe works which might be matter of boaſting. Man in his depraved ſtate, under the power of ſuch corruption, could never, by any works of his own, gain acceptance with God; but it muſt be reſolved purely into the free grace of God, given through Jeſus Chriſt to all true believers who receive it as a free gift.

Juſtifying faith reſpects Chriſt as a Saviour in all his three anointed offices, as prophet, prieſt, and king; truſting in him, accepting of him, and adhering to him in all theſe.

Respecting the propitiation which Christ is set forth to be, God declares his righteousness,

1. In the propitiation itself Never was there such a demonstration of the justice and holiness of God, as there was in the death of Christ. It appears that he hates sin, when nothing less than the blood of Christ would satisfy for it. Finding sin, though but imputed, upon his own Son, he did not spare him, because he had made himself sin *for us*, 2 Cor. v. 21. The iniquities of us all being laid upon him, though he was the Son of his love, yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him, Isa. liii. 10.

2. In the pardon upon that propitiation. So it follows by way of explication, *that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth. Mercy and truth* are so met together, *righteousness and peace* have so kissed each other, that it is not only an act of grace and mercy, but an act of righteousness in God to pardon the sins of penitent believers, having accepted the satisfaction that Christ, by dying, made to his justice for them. It would not stand with his justice to demand the debt of the principal, when the surety hath paid it; and he hath accepted that payment in full satisfaction. See 1 John, i. 9. He is just, i. e. faithful to his word.

The law is still of use to convince us of what is past, and to direct us for the future. Though we cannot be saved by it as a covenant, yet we own it, and submit to it as a rule in the hand of the Mediator, subordinate to the law of grace; and so are so far

from overthrowing, that we *establish the law*. Let those consider this, who deny the obligation of the moral law to believers.

CHAP. IV.

Ver. 17—22. It is the holy wisdom and policy of faith, to fasten particularly on that in God which is accommodated to the difficulties wherewith it is to wrestle. And will most effectually answer the objections. It is faith indeed to build upon the all-sufficiency of God for the accomplishment of that which is impossible to any thing but that all-sufficiency.

It is mere weakness of faith that makes a man lie poring upon the difficulties and seeming impossibilities that lie in the way of a promise. Though it may seem to be the wisdom and policy of carnal reason, yet it is the weakness of faith to look into the bottom of all the difficulties that arise against the promise.

Unbelief is at the bottom of all our staggerings at God's promises. It is not the promise that fails, but our faith that fails when we stagger. Abraham *was strong in faith*, and hereby *he gave glory to God*; for as unbelief dishonours God by making him a liar, 1 John, v. 10. so faith honours God, by setting to its seal that he is true, John iii. 33. Abraham's faith gave God the glory of his wisdom, power, holiness, goodness, and especially of his faithfulness, resting upon the word which he had spoken.

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Ver. 23—25. 1. Chriſt was *delivered for our offences.* God the Father delivered him; he delivered up himſelf as a ſacrifice for ſin. He died to make atonement for our ſins, to expiate guilt, to ſatisfy divine juſtice.

2. He was *raised again for our justification,* i. e. for the perfecting and completing of our juſtification. By the merit of his death he paid our debt, in his reſurrection he took out our acquittance. When he was buried he lay a priſoner in execution for our debt, which, as a ſurety, he had undertaken to pay; on the third day an angel was ſent to roll away the ſtone, and ſo to diſcharge the priſoner; which was the greateſt aſſurance poſſible that divine juſtice was ſatisfied, the debt paid, or elſe he would never have releaſed the priſoner: and therefore the apoſtle puts a ſpecial emphaſis on Chriſt's reſurrection: it is Chriſt that died, *yea rather that is risen again,* Rom. viii. 34.

CHAP. V.

Ver. 6—21. The parallel that the apoſtle runs between the communication of ſin and death by the firſt Adam, and of righteouſneſs and life by the ſecond Adam, doth not only illuſtrate the truth he is diſcourſing of, but tends very much to the commending of the love of God, and the comforting of true believers; in ſhewing a correſpondence between

our fall and our recovery; and not only a like, but a much greater power in the ſecond Adam to make us happy, than there was in the firſt to make us miſerable. Paul lays down a general truth as the foundation of his diſcourſe, that Adam was a type of Chriſt. *Who is the figure of him that was to come.* Chriſt is therefore called the *last* Adam, 1 Cor. xv. 45. In this Adam was a type of Chriſt, that in the covenant tranſactions which were between God and him, and in the conſequent events of thoſe tranſactions, Adam was a public perſon. God dealt with Adam, and Adam acted as ſuch a one, as a common father root and repreſentative of, and for, all his poſterity; ſo that what he did in that ſtation, as agent for us, we may be ſaid to have done in him; and what was done to him, may be ſaid to have been done to us in him. Thus Jeſus Chriſt, the Mediator, acted as a public perſon, the head of all the elect, dealt with God for them, as their father, root and repreſentative; died for them, roſe for them, entered within the veil for them, did all for them. When Adam failed, we failed with him; when Chriſt performed, he performed for us. Thus was Adam the *figure of him that was to come*, to come to repair that breach which Adam had made.

It is a great proof of original ſin, that little children, who were never guilty of any actual tranſgreſſions, yet are liable to very terrible diſeaſes, caſualties and deaths; which could by no means be re-

conciled with the juſtice and righteouſneſs of God, if they were not chargeable with guilt.

CHAP. VI.

The apoſtle having at large aſſerted, opened and proved the great doctrine of juſtification by faith, for fear leſt any ſhould ſuck poiſon out of that ſweet flower, and turn that grace of God into wantonneſs and licentiouſneſs, he doth, with a like zeal, copiouſneſs of expreſſion, and cogency of argument, preſs the abſolute neceſſity of ſanctification and a holy life, as the inſeparable fruit and companion of juſtification; for wherever Jeſus Chriſt is made of God unto any ſoul righteouſneſs, he is made unto that ſoul ſanctification, 1 Cor. i. 30.

Ver. 1—23. We may obſerve as to the nature of ſanctification, that in general it has two things in it, *mortification* and *vivification*; dying to ſin and living to righteousneſs; elſewhere expreſſed by putting off the old man, and putting on the new; ceaſing to do evil, and learning to do well.

The death of the croſs was a ſlow death; the body, after it was nailed to the croſs, gave many a throe and many a ſtruggle; but it was a ſure death, long in expiring, but expired at laſt; ſuch is the mortification of ſin in believers.

God's promiſes to us are more powerful and effectual for the mortifying of ſin, than our promiſes to God. Sin may ſtruggle in a believer, and may

create him a great deal of trouble; but it ſhall not have dominion: may vex him; but it ſhall not rule over him. Chriſt rules by the golden ſceptre of his grace; and he will not let ſin have dominion over thoſe who are willing ſubjects of that rule.

All the children of men are either the ſervants of God, or the ſervants of ſin: theſe are the two families. Now, if we would know to which of theſe families we belong, we muſt enquire to which of theſe maſters we yield obedience. Our obeying the laws of ſin will be an evidence againſt us, that we belong to that family on which death is entailed: as on the contrary our obeying the laws of Chriſt will evidence our relation to Chriſt's family. *The wages of sin is death.* *Death* is as due to a ſinner when he hath ſinned, as *wages* are to a ſervant when he hath done his work. There is no ſin in its own nature venial: *death is the wages of the least sin. The gift of God is eternal life.* Heaven is life, conſiſting in the viſion and fruition of God; and it is *eternal life*, no infirmities attending it, no death to put a period to it.

This is *the gift of God. The death is the wages of sin*, it comes by deſert; but the *life is a gift*, it comes by favour. Sinners merit hell, but ſaints do not merit heaven. There is no proportion between the glory of heaven, and our obedience. We muſt thank God, and not ourſelves, if ever we get to heaven. And this gift is *through Jesus Christ our Lord.* It is Chriſt that purchaſed it, prepared it, prepares

us for it, preſerves us to it. He is *the alpha and omega*, all and all in our ſalvation.

CHAP. VII.

Ver. 7—14. We never ſee the deſperate venom and malignity there is in ſin, till we come to compare it with the law, and the ſpiritual nature of the law, and then we ſee it to be an evil and a bitter thing.

Ever ſince Adam ate forbidden fruit, we have all been fond of forbidden paths. The diſeaſed appetite is carried out moſt ſtrongly towards that which is hurtful and prohibited. *Without the law sin was dead*, as a ſnake in winter, which the ſun-beams of the law quicken and irritate.

Ver. 14—25. While Paul was preſſing forwards towards perfection, yet he acknowledged that he had not already attained, neither was already perfect, Phil. iii. 12. Fain would he be free from all ſin, and perfectly do the will of God, ſuch was his ſettled judgment; but his corrupt nature drew him another way. It was like a clog that checked and kept him down when he would have ſoared upwards; like the bias in a bowl, which when it is thrown ſtraight, yet draws it aſide.

In me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good, ſaith Paul. Here he explains himſelf concerning the corrupt nature, which he calls *flesh*; and, as far as that goes, there is no good to be expected; no more

than one would expect good corn growing upon a rock, or on the ſand which is by the ſea ſide. As the new nature, as far as that goes, cannot commit ſin, 1 John, iii. 9. ſo the *flesh*, the old nature, as far as that goes, cannot perform a good duty. How ſhould it? for the fleſh *serveth the law of sin;* it is under the conduct and government of that law; and while it is ſo, it is not like to do any good. The corrupt nature is elſewhere called *flesh*, Gen. vi. 3. John iii. 6. and though there may be good things dwelling in thoſe who have this fleſh; yet as far as the fleſh goes, there is no good; the fleſh is not a ſubject capable of any good. The apoſtle here compares the corrupt and ſinful inclination in him to a law, becauſe it controlled and checked him in his good motions.

This wars againſt *the law of the mind*, i. e. the new nature. It draws the contrary way, drives on a contrary intereſt; which corrupt diſpoſition and inclination is as great a burden and grief to the ſoul, as the worſt drudgery and captivity could be. *It brings me into captivity.*

Wherever there is grace there is not only a dread of the ſeverity of the law, but a conſent to the goodneſs of the law: it is good in itſelf, it is good for me. This is a ſign that the law is written in the heart, that the ſoul is delivered into the mold of it. To conſent to the law, is ſo far to approve of it, as not to wiſh it otherwiſe conſtituted than it is. The ſanctified judgment doth not only concur to the equity of the

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law, but to the excellency of it, as convinced that a conformity to the law is the highest perfection of the human nature, and the greatest honour and happiness we are capable of.

CHAP. VIII.

The apostle having fully explained the doctrine of *justification*, and presented the necessity of *sanctification*, in this chapter applies himself to the *consolation* of the Lord's people. Ministers are helpers of the joy of the saints. Comfort ye, *comfort ye my people*, so runs our commission, Isa. xl. 1. It is the will of God, that his people should be a comforted people. And we have here such a draught of the gospel-charter, such a display of the unspeakable privileges of true believers, as may furnish us with abundant matter for joy and peace in believing, that by all these immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation. And many of the people of God have accordingly found this chapter a well-spring of comfort to their souls, living and dying; and have sucked and been satisfied from these breasts of consolation, and with joy draw water out of these wells of salvation.

Ver. 1—9. The apostle here begins with one signal privilege of true christians, and describes the character of such to whom it belongs. *There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in*

Christ Jesus. This is his triumph after that melancholy complaint and conflict in the foregoing chapter, ſin remaining, diſturbing, vexing, but, bleſſed be God, not ruining. The complaint he takes to himſelf; but humbly transfers the comfort with himſelf to all true believers, who are all intereſted in it.

1. It is the unſpeakable privilege and comfort of all thoſe *that are* in Chriſt Jeſus, that there is *now no condemnation to them.* He doth not ſay, there is no accuſation againſt them, for that there is; but the accuſation is thrown out, and the indictment quaſhed. He doth not ſay, there is nothing in them which deſerves condemnation, for that there is, and they ſee it, and own it, and condemn themſelves for it; but it ſhall not be their ruin. He doth not ſay, there is no croſs, no affliction to them, nor no diſpleaſure in the affliction, for that there may be; but no condemnation. They may be chaſtened of the Lord, but not condemned with the world. Now this ariſes from their being *in Christ Jesus.* They are in Chriſt Jeſus as in their city of refuge, and ſo are protected from the avenger of blood. There is *therefore* no condemnation, becauſe they are intereſted in the ſatisfaction which Chriſt by dying made to the law. In Chriſt, God doth not only not condemn them, but is well-pleaſed with them, Matt. xvii. 5.

2. It is the undoubted character of all thoſe who are ſo in Chriſt Jeſus, as to be freed from condemnation, that *they walk not after the flesh but after*

the Spirit. Obſerve, the character is given from their *walk*, not from any one particular act, but from their courſe and way. And the great queſtion is, What is the principle of the walk, the fleſh or the ſpirit, the old or the new nature, corruption or grace? for which of theſe do we mind, for which of theſe do we make proviſion, by which of theſe are we governed, which of theſe do we take part with?

Ver. 10—16. Carnal pleaſure, worldly profit and honour, the things of ſenſe and time, are *the things of the flesh*, which unregenerate people mind. The favour of God, the welfare of the ſoul, the concerns of eternity, are *the things of the Spirit*, which they who are after the Spirit do mind.

God, as a Judge, ſays Dr. Manton, by *the spirit of bondage*, ſends us to Chriſt as Mediator; and Chriſt as Mediator, by *the Spirit of adoption*, ſends us back again to God as a Father.

The Spirit's teſtimony is always agreeable to the written word, and is therefore always grounded upon ſanctification; for the Spirit in the heart cannot contradict the Spirit in the word.

Ver. 26—28. Either directly or indirectly every providence hath a tendency to the ſpiritual good of thoſe who love God; breaking them off from ſin, bringing them nearer to God, weaning them from the world, fitting them for heaven.

None can know their election, but by their conformity to the image of Chriſt; for all who are choſen are choſen to ſanctification, 2 Theſſ. ii. 13. and

surely it cannot be a temptation to any to be conformed to the world, to believe that they were predestinated to be conformed to Christ.

Ver. 31—39. He that embraced the stake, and said, welcome the cross of Christ, welcome everlasting life: He that dated his letter from the delectable orchard of the Leonine prison: He that said, in these flames I feel no more pain than if I were upon a bed of down: She that, a little before her martyrdom, being asked how she did, said, Well and merry, and going to heaven: Those who have gone smiling to the stake, and stood singing in the flames:—these were more than conquerors.

Mr. Hugh Kennedy, an eminent christian of Aire in Scotland, when he was dying, called for a Bible; but finding his sight gone, he said, turn me to the eighth of the Romans, and set my finger at those words, *I am persuaded that neither death nor life*, &c. "Now," said he "is my finger upon them?" And when they told him it was, without speaking any more he said, "Now God be with you, my children; I have breakfasted with you, and shall sup with my Lord Jesus this night;" and so departed.

CHAP. IX.

Ver. 14—24. All the children of men being plunged alike into a state of sin and misery, equally under guilt and wrath, God in a way of sovereignty, picks out some from this fallen apostatised race, to be

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veſſels of grace and glory. He diſpenſeth his gifts to whom he will, without giving us any reaſon; according to his own good pleaſure pitcheth upon ſome to be monuments of mercy and grace, preventing grace, effectual grace, while he paſſeth by others. The various dealings of God, by which he makes ſome to differ from others, muſt be reſolved into his ſovereignty. He is debtor to no man; his grace is his own; and he may give it or withhold it as it pleaſeth him. We have none of us deſerved it, nay, we have all juſtly forfeited it a thouſand times; ſo that herein the work of our ſalvation is admiraby well ordered, that thoſe who are ſaved muſt thank God only, and thoſe who periſh muſt thank themſelves only, Hoſ. xiii. 9.

Ver. 25—29. It is ſo far from being an impeachment of the juſtice and righteouſneſs of God, that ſo many periſh and are deſtroyed, that it is a wonder of divine power and mercy that all are not deſtroyed, that any are ſaved: for even thoſe who are left to be a ſeed, if God had dealt with them according to their ſins, had periſhed with the reſt.

CHAP. X.

Ver. 12—21. Obſerve, 1. What the goſpel is: it is the goſpel of peace; it is the word of reconciliation between God and man. *On earth peace*, Luke ii. 14. Or, peace is put in general for all good; ſo it is ex-

preſſed here: it is *glad tidings of good things.* The things of the goſpel are good things indeed: the beſt tidings concerning them are the moſt joyful tidings, the beſt news that ever came from heaven to earth.

2. What the work of miniſters is; to *preach* this goſpel, to *bring these glad tidings*; to evangeliſe peace (ſo the original is) to evangeliſe good things. Every preacher is in this ſenſe an evangeliſt.

3. How acceptable they ſhould therefore be to the children of men for their work's ſake. *How beautiful are the feet!* i. e. how welcome are they! Thoſe who preach the goſpel of peace, ſhould ſee to it that their *feet*, i, e. their life and converſation be beautiful. The holineſs of miniſters' lives is the beauty of their feet.

CHAP. XI.

Ver. 1—32. *I have reserved*, ſaid God to Elias, *to myself, seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal.*

Note, 1. Things are often times much better with the church of God than wiſe and good men think they are. They are ready to conclude hardly, and to give up all for gone, when it is not ſo.

2. In times of general apoſtacy, there is uſually a remnant that keep their integrity; ſome, though but a few: all do not go one way.

3. That when there is a remnant who keep their integrity in times of general apoſtacy, it is God that reſerves to himſelf that remnant. If he had left them to themſelves, they had gone down the ſtream with the reſt. It is his free and almighty grace that makes the difference between them and others.

The deſcription of this remnant is, that *they have not bowed the knee to Baal.* The beſt evidence of integrity is a freedom from the preſent prevailing corruptions of the times and places that we live in; to ſwim againſt the ſtream when it is ſtrong; not to bow to Baal when every body bows.

Ver. 33—36. Paul was as well acquainted with the myſteries of the kingdom of God as ever any mere man was; and yet he confeſſeth himſelf at a loſs in the contemplation; and deſpairing to find the bottom, he humbly ſits down at the brink, and adores the depth.

We cannot give a reaſon of God's proceedings, nor by ſearching find out God. See Job v. 9.—ix. 10. The judgments of his mouth, and the way of our duty, bleſſed be God, are plain and eaſy, it is a highway; but the judgments of his hands, and the ways of his Providence, are dark and myſterious, which therefore we muſt not pry into, but ſilently adore and acquieſce in.

Paul reſolves all into the ſovereignty of God. *For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things*, i. e. God is all in all. All things in heaven and earth, eſpecially thoſe things which relate to our

ſalvation, the things which belong to our peace, they *are all of him* by way of creation, *through him* by way of providential influence, that they may be *to him* in their final tendency and reſult. Of God, as the ſpring and fountain of all; through Chriſt, God-man, as the conveyance; to God, as the ultimate end. Theſe three include, in general, all God's cauſal relations to his creatures; *of him*, as the firſt efficient; *through him*, as the grand medium; *to him*, as the ultimate final cauſe; for the Lord hath made all things for himſelf, Rev. iv. 11.

CHAP. XII.

The apoſtle having at large cleared and confirmed the prime fundamental doctrines of chriſtianity, comes in the next place to preſs the principal duties. We miſtake our religion if we look upon it only as a ſyſtem of notions, and a guide to ſpeculation. No, it is a practical religion, that tends to the right ordering of the converſation. It is deſigned, not only to inform our judgments, but to reform our hearts and lives. From the method of the apoſtles' writing in this, as in ſome other of the epiſtles (as from the conduct of the principal miniſters of ſtate in Chriſt's kingdom) the ſtewards of the myſteries of God may take direction how to *divide the word of truth*. Not to preſs duty abſtract from privilege, nor privilege abſtract from duty; but always to let both go together, with an expreſs deſign that they may

greatly promote and befriend each other. The duties are drawn from the privileges by way of inference. The foundation of christian practice must be laid in christian knowledge and faith. We must first understand how we receive Christ Jesus the Lord, and then we shall know the better how to walk in him.

There is a great deal of duty prescribed in this chapter. The exhortations are short and pithy, briefly summing up what is good, and what the Lord our God in Christ requires of us. It is an abridgment of the christian directory, an excellent collection of rules, for the right ordering of the conversation as becomes the gospel.

It is joined to the foregoing discourse by the word *therefore*. It is the practical application of doctrinal truths; that is the life of preaching. He had been discoursing at large of justification by faith, and of the riches of free grace, and the pledges and assurances we have of the glory that is to be revealed. From hence carnal libertines would be apt to infer, therefore we may live as we list, and walk in the way of our hearts and the sight of our eyes. No, that doth not follow: the faith which justifies is a faith that works by love: and there is no other way to heaven, but the way of holiness and obedience. Therefore what God hath joined together, let no man put asunder.

The particular exhortations of this chapter are reducible to the three principal heads of christian

duty; our duty to God, to ourſelves, and to our brother. The grace of God teaches us in general to live *godly, soberly, and righteously*, and to deny all which is contrary hereunto. Now this chapter will give us to underſtand what that godlineſs, ſobriety, and righteouſneſs is, though ſomewhat intermixed.

Ver. 1—21. There were ſacrifices of atonement, and ſacrifices of acknowledgment. Chriſt is the only ſacrifice of atonement, who was once offered to bear the ſins of many; but our perſons and performances tendered to God through Chriſt our prieſt, are as ſacrifices of acknowledgment to the honour of God.

Thoſe who rejoice in hope, are likely to be patient in tribulation. It is a believing proſpect of the joy ſet before us, which bears up the ſpirit under all outward preſſure.

A pleaſing countenance in acts of mercy is a great relief and comfort to the miſerable; when they ſee it is not done grudgingly and unwillingly, but with pleaſant looks and gentle words, and all poſſible indications of readineſs and alacrity.

We muſt be ready, as we have ability and opportunity, to relieve any that are in want: but we are in a ſpecial manner bound to communicate to the *saints*.

There is a common love owing to our fellow-creatures, but a ſpecial love owing our fellow-chriſtians: Gal. vi. 10. *Especially to them who are of the houshold of faith.*

CHAP. XIII.

Ver. 1—6. We are here taught how carry ourselves towards magistrates, and those who are in authority over us, called here the *higher powers*; intimating their authority, they are powers; and their dignity, they are higher powers; including not only the king as supreme, but all inferior magistrates under him: and yet it is expressed not by the *persons* who are in that power, but the place of power itself in which they are. However the persons themselves may be wicked, and of those *vile persons* which the citizen of Sion *contemneth*, Psalm xv. 4. yet the just power which they have must be submitted to and obeyed.

This is not at all applicable to the particular rights of kings and kingdoms, and the branches of their constitution; nor can any certain rule be fetched from hence for the modelling of the original contracts betwixt the governors and governed: but it is intended for directions to private persons, in their private capacity, to behave themselves quietly and peaceably in the sphere which God hath set them, with a due regard to the civil powers, which God in his providence hath set over them, 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2.

Whatever the particular form and method of government is; whether by monarchy, aristocracy,

or democracy; wherever the governing power is lodged, it is an ordinance of God, and it is to be received and ſubmitted to accordingly; though immediately an ordinance of man, 1 Pet. ii. 13. yet originally an ordinance of God. Protection draws allegiance. If we have protection from the government, we owe ſubjection to it; by upholding the government, we keep up our own hedge.

Ver. 11—14. *Put on the Lord Jesus Christ.* Put on the righteouſneſs of Chriſt for juſtification. Put on the Spirit and grace of Chriſt for ſanctification; put on the *new man*, Eph. iv. 24. Put him on as Lord to rule you, as Jeſus to ſave you, and in both as Chriſt anointed and appointed by the Father to this ruling, ſaving work.

Make not provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof. The neceſſities of the body muſt be conſidered; but the luſts of it muſt not be gratified. Natural deſires muſt be anſwered; but wanton appetites muſt be checked and denied. To ask meat for our neceſſities is duty, we are taught to pray for daily bread; but to ask meat for our luſts is provoking, Pſalm lxxviii. 18. Thoſe who profeſs to walk in the Spirit muſt not fulfil the luſts of the fleſh, Gal. v. 16.

CHAP. XIV.

Ver. 1—23. *The kingdom of God is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.* Theſe

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are ſome of the eſſentials of chriſtianity; things in which all the people of God are agreed; in the purſuit of which we muſt ſpend our zeal, and which we muſt mind with an excelling care. Righteouſneſs, peace and joy are very comprehenſive words; and each of them includes much, both of the foundation and the ſuperſtructure of religion. Might I limit the ſenſe of them, it ſhould be thus: As to God, our great concern is *righteousness*; to appear before him juſtified by the merit of Chriſt's death, ſanctified by the Spirit of his grace; for the righteous Lord loveth righteouſneſs As to our brethren, it is *peace*; to live in peace and love, and charity with them; following peace with all men. Chriſt came into the world to be the great peace-maker. As to ourſelves, it is *joy in the Holy Ghost*; that ſpiritual joy which is wrought by the bleſſed Spirit in the hearts of believers, which reſpects God as their reconciled Father, and heaven as their expected home.

He that doth a thing which he verily believeth to be unlawful, however the thing be in itſelf, to him it is a ſin.

CHAP. XV.

Ver. 7—12. Receive ye one another into your affection, into your communion, and into your common converſation, as there is occaſion. The apoſtle had exhorted the ſtrong to receive the weak,

chap. xiv. 1. here *receive one another;* for ſometimes the prejudices of the weak chriſtian make him ſhy of the ſtrong, as much as the pride of the ſtrong chriſtian makes him ſhy of the weak; neither of which ought to be. Let there be a mutual embracing among chriſtians. Thoſe who have received Chriſt by faith, muſt receive all chriſtians by brotherly love; though poor in the world, though perſecuted and deſpiſed, though it may be matter of reproach and danger to them to receive them; though in the leſs weighty matters of the law they are of different apprehenſions; though there may have been occaſion for private piques; yet laying aſide theſe, and the like conſiderations, *receive ye one another.*

Now the reaſon why chriſtians muſt receive one another, is taken from the condeſcending love of Chriſt to us: *As Christ also received us to the glory of God.* Can there be a more cogent argument? Hath Chriſt been ſo kind to us, and ſhall we be ſo unkind to thoſe who are his? Was he ſo forward to entertain us, and ſhall we be backward to entertain our brethren.

Thoſe that agree in Chriſt, who is the Alpha and the Omega, the Firſt and the Laſt, and the great center of unity, may well afford to agree among themſelves.

Ver. 22—29. Time was when the ſaints at Jeruſalem were on the giving hand, and very liberal they were, when they laid their eſtates at the apoſtles' feet

for charitable uſes, and took ſpecial care that the Grecian widows ſhould not be neglected in the daily miniſtration, Acts vi. 1. And now the Providence of God had turned the ſcale, and made them neceſſitous, they found the Grecians kind to them: for the merciful ſhall obtain mercy. We ſhould therefore give a portion to ſeven, and alſo to eight, becauſe we know not what evil may be on the earth, which may make us glad to be beholden to others.

CHAP. XVI.

Paul is now concluding this long and excellent epiſtle, and he doth it with a great deal of affection.

As in the main body of the epiſtle he appears to have been a very knowing man, ſo in theſe appurtenances of it he appears to have been a very loving man. So much knowledge and ſo much love, is a very rare, but, where it is, a very excellent and amiable compoſition; for what is heaven, but knowledge and love made perfect?

Ver. 1—16. Paul ſends greeting, not only to Aquila and Priſcilla, but likewiſe *to the church in their houſe*. It ſeems then a church in a houſe is no ſuch abſurd thing as ſome make it to be. Perhaps there was a congregation of chriſtians that uſed to meet at their houſe at ſtated times; and then, no doubt, it was like the houſe of Obed-Edom, bleſſed for the ark's ſake. Others think, the church was no

more than a religious, pious, well-governed family, that kept up the worſhip of God. Religion in the power of it reigning in a family will turn a houſe into a church. And doubtleſs it had a good influence upon this, that Priſcilla the good wife of the family was ſo very eminent and forward in religion; ſo eminent that ſhe is often named firſt. A virtuous woman, who looks well to the ways of her houſhold, may do much towards the advancement of religion in a family. When Priſcilla and Aquila were at Epheſus, though but ſojourners there, yet there alſo they had *a church in their house*, 1 Cor. xvi. 19. A truly godly man will be careful to take religion with him wherever he goes. When Abraham removed his tent, he renewed his altar, Gen. xiii. 18.

I. CORINTHIANS.

CORINTH was a principal city of Greece, in that particular division of it which was called Achaia. It was situate on the Isthmus (or neck of land) that joined Peloponnensus to the rest of Greece, on the southern side, and had two parts adjoining, one at the bottom of the Corinthian gulph, called Lechæum, not far from the city, from whence they traded to Italy and the west; the other, at the bottom of the Sinus Saronicus, called Cenchrea, at a more remote distance, from whence they traded to Asia. From this situation, it is no wonder that Corinth should be a place of great trade and wealth. And as affluence is apt to produce luxury of all kinds; neither is it to be wondered at, if a place so famous for wealth and arts, should be infamous for vice. It was particularly noted for fornication; yet in this lewd city did Paul, by the blessing of God on his labours, plant and raise a christian church, chiefly

among the Gentiles, though it is not impoſſible that many Jewiſh converts might be alſo among them. He continued in this city near two years.

Some time after he left them, he wrote this epiſtle to them, to water what he had planted, and rectify ſome groſs diſorders which during his abſence had been introduced, partly from the intereſt ſome falſe teacher or teachers had obtained amongſt them, and partly from the leaven of their old *maxims* and *manners*. And it is but too viſible how much their wealth had helped to corrupt their manners, from the ſeveral faults for which the apoſtle reprehends them. Pride, avarice, luxury, luſt, the natural offspring of a corrupt mind, are all fed and prompted by outward affluence. And with all theſe, either the body of this people, or ſome particular perſons among them, are here charged by the apoſtle.

CHAP. I.

Ver. 17—31. All we have we received from God as the fountain, and in and through Chriſt as the channel of conveyance. He is made of God to us *wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption*. All we need or can deſire. We are *foolishness*, ignorant and blind in the things of God, with

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all our boasted knowledge; and he is made *wisdom* to us. We are guilty, obnoxious to justice; and he is made *righteousness*, our great atonement and sacrifice. We are depraved and corrupt; and he is made *sanctification*, the spring of our spiritual life. From him the head, it is communicated to all the members of his mystical body by his Holy Spirit. We are in *bonds*; and he is made redemption to us, our saviour and deliverer.

Observe, that where Christ is made *righteousness* to any soul, he is also made *sanctification*. He never discharges from the guilt of sin, without delivering from the power of it. And he is made righteousness and sanctification, that he may in the end be made complete redemption, and free the soul from the very being of sin, and loose the body from the bonds of the grave. And what is designed in all this is, *that all flesh may glory in the Lord.* Observe, That it is the will of God all our glorying should be in the Lord: and our salvation being only through Christ, it is thereby effectually provided it should be so. Man is humbled, and God glorified and exalted by the whole scheme.

CHAP. II.

Ver. 1—5. Christ, in his person and offices, is the sum and substance of the gospel, and ought to be the great subject of a gospel minister's preaching. His business is to display the banner of the cross,

and invite people under it. Any one who heard Paul preach, found him to harp so continually on this string, that he would say he knew nothing but Christ and him crucified. Whatsoever other knowledge he had, this was the only knowledge he discovered and shewed himself concerned to propagate among his hearers.

Ver. 6—16. Paul wrote what he taught, and what he taught was revealed of God by his Spirit; *That Spirit that searcheth all things, yea the deep things of God, and knows the things of God, as the spirit of a man that is in him knows the things of a man.* A double argument is drawn from these words in proof of the divinity of the Holy Ghost.

1. *Omniscience* is attributed to him. *He searcheth all things, even the deep things of God.* He has exact knowledge of all things, and enters into the very depths of God, penetrates into his most secret counsels. Now, who can have such a thorough knowledge of God, but God?

2. This allusion seems to imply, that the Holy Spirit is as much in God, as a man's mind is in himself. Now the mind of a man is plainly essential to him. He cannot be without his mind. Nor can God be without his Spirit. He is as much and as intimately one with God, as the man's mind is with the man. The man knows his own mind, because his mind is one with himself. The Spirit of God knows the things of God, because he is one with God. And as no man can come to the knowledge

of what is in another man's mind, till he communicates and reveals it; so neither can we know the secret counsels and purposes of God, till they are made known to us by his Holy Spirit.

CHAP. III.

Ver. 1—4. Contentions and quarrels about religion, are sad evidences of remaining carnality. True religion makes men peaceable, and not contentious. Factious spirits act upon human principles, not upon principles of true religion: they are guided by their own pride and passions, and not by the rules of christianity.

Ver. 11—15. The doctrine of our Saviour and his mediation, is the principal doctrine of christianity. It lies at the bottom, and is the foundation of all the rest. Leave out this, and you lay waste all our comforts, and leave no foundation for our hopes as sinners. It is in Christ *only that God is reconciling a sinful world to himself*, 2 Cor. v. 19.

Ver. 21—23. Ministers are not to be set up in competition with one another. All faithful ministers are serving one Lord, and pursuing one purpose. They were appointed of Christ for the common benefit of the church.

If we belong to Christ, and are true to him, all good belongs to us, and is sure to us. All is ours, time and eternity, earth and heaven, life and death.

We shall want no good thing, Pſalm lxxxiv. 11. But it muſt he remembered at the ſame time, that *we are Chriſt's*, the ſubjects of his kingdom, his property. He is Lord over us, and we muſt own his dominion, and chearfully ſubmit to his command, and yield ourſelves to his pleaſure, if we would have all things miniſter to our advantage. All things are ours, upon no other footing than our being Chriſt's. Out of him we are without juſt title or claim to any thing that is good.

CHAP. IV.

Ver. 1—6. In our opinion of miniſters, as well as all other things, we ſhould be careful to avoid extremes. Apoſtles themſelves were,

1. Not to be *overvalued*, for they were *miniſters, not maſters; ſtewards, not lords.* They were ſervants of Chriſt, and no more, though they were ſervants of the higheſt rank, who had the care of his houſhold, who were to provide food for the reſt, and appoint and direct their work.

2 Apoſtles were not to be *undervalued*; for though they were miniſters, they were miniſters of Chriſt. The character and dignity of their Maſter puts an honour on them. Though they are but ſtewards, they are not ſtewards of the common things of the world, but of divine myſteries. They had a great truſt, and for that reaſon had an honourable office.

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He that would be faithful to Chriſt, muſt deſpiſe the cenſures of men for his ſake. He muſt look upon it as a very little thing, if his Lord approves him, what judgment men form of him.

Ver. 14—16. In reproving for ſin, we ſhould have a tender regard for the reputation, as well as the reformation of the ſinner. We ſhould aim to diſtinguiſh between them and their ſins, and take care not to diſcover any ſpite againſt them ourſelves, nor expoſe them to contempt and reproach in the world. Reproofs that expoſe commonly do but exaſperate, when thoſe who kindly and affectionately warn, are likely to reform.

Miniſters ſhould ſo live, as that their people may take pattern from them, and live after their copy. They ſhould guide them by their *lives* as well as their *lips*; go before them in the way to heaven, and not content themſelves with pointing it out.

As miniſters are to ſet a pattern, others muſt take it. They ſhould follow them, as far as they are ſatisfied they follow Chriſt in faith and practice.

CHAP. V.

Ver. 1—6. Others' ſins ſhould be our ſorrow. Nay churches ſhould mourn for the ſcandalous behaviour of particular members, and if they are incorrigible ſhould remove them. *He that had done this wicked deed* ſhould have been *taken away from among them.* In dealing with ſcandalous ſinners, not only are they

to be charged with the fact, but the aggravating circumstances of it.

Church censures are Christ's ordinances, and should be dispensed in his name: and those on notorious and incorrigible sinners should be passed with great solemnity.

The great end of church-censures is the good of those who fall under them; their spiritual and eternal good. It is that *their spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.* Yet it is not merely a regard to their benefit that is to be had in proceeding against them; for as there is danger from the contagion of their examples, concern for their own purity and preservation should engage christian churches to remove gross and scandalous sinners.

Ver. 7, 8. Christians should be careful to keep themselves clean, as well as purge polluted members out of their society: and they should especially avoid the sins to which themselves were once most addicted, and the reigning vices of the places and people where they live.

CHAP. VI.

Ver. 1—8. Christians should never engage in law-suits, till all other remedies are tried in vain. Prudent christians should prevent if possible disputes, and not appeal to courts of judicature to decide them, especially in matters of no great importance.

Ver. 9—11. The wickedness of men before conversion, is no bar to their regeneration and reconciliation to God.

The blood of Christ, and the *washing of regeneration*, can purge away all guilt and defilement. But none are cleansed from the guilt of sin and reconciled to God through Christ, but those who are also sanctified by his Spirit. All who are made righteous *in the sight* of God, are made holy *by the grace* of God.

Ver. 12—20. We are not proprietors of ourselves, nor have power over ourselves, and therefore should not use ourselves according to our own pleasure, but according to his will and for his glory, *whose we are, and whom we serve*, Acts xxvii. 23.

CHAP. VII.

Ver. 17—24. It is the duty of every christian to suit his behaviour to his condition and the rules of religion, to be content with his lot, and carry himself in his rank and place as becomes a christian.

It is practical religion, sincere obedience to the commands of God, on which the gospel lays stress. External observances, without internal piety, are as nothing.

The servants of Christ should be at the absolute command of no other master besides himself, should

ſerve no man, any farther than is conſiſtent with their duty to him.

The ſpecial preſence and favour of God is not limited to any outward condition or performance. He may enjoy it who is circumciſed, and ſo may he who is uncircumciſed. He that is bound may have it as well as he who is free. In this reſpect, *there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian nor Scythian, bond nor free*, Col. iii. 11.

Ver. 25—35. The world may be uſed, but muſt not be abuſed. It is abuſed when it is not uſed to thoſe purpoſes for which it is given, to honour God and do good to men. When, inſtead of being oil to the wheels of our obedience, it is fuel to luſt. When, inſtead of being a ſervant, it is made our maſter, our idol, and hath that room in our affections which ſhould be reſerved for God.

Ver. 39—40. Marriages are only like to have God's bleſſing when they are made in the Lord. When perſons are guided by the fear of God, and the laws of God, and act in dependence upon the providence of God, in the change and choice of a mate. When they can look up to God, and ſincerely ſeek his direction, and humbly hope for his bleſſing upon their conduct.

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CHAP. IX.

Ver. 3—14. Those who enjoy spiritual benefits by the ministry of the word, should not grudge a maintenance to such as are employed in this work. It is the people's duty to maintain their ministers by Christ's appointment, though it be not a duty bound on every minister to call for or accept it. He may wave his right as Paul did, without being a sinner; but they transgress an appointment of Christ who deny or withhold it. They who preach the gospel have a right to live by it; and they who attend on their ministry, and yet take no thought about their subsistence, fail very much in their duty to Christ, and the respect owing to them.

Ver. 24—27. A preacher of salvation may yet miss it. He may shew others the way to heaven and never get thither himself. Holy fear of ourselves, and not presumptuous confidence, is the best security against apostacy from God, and final rejection by him.

CHAP. XI.

Ver. 1—16. Ministers are likely to preach most to the purpose when they can press their hearers to follow their example. Yet would not Paul be followed blindly neither. He encourageth neither implicit faith nor obedience. He would be followed him-

ſelf no farther than he followed Chriſt. Chriſt's pattern is a copy without a blot, ſo is no man's elſe.

Note, We ſhould follow no leader farther than he followed Chriſt. Apoſtles ſhould be left by us when they deviate from the example of their Maſter.

When we reprove what is amiſs in any, it is very prudent and fit to commend what is good in them. It will ſhew that the reproof is not from *ill-will*, and an humour of cenſuring and finding fault: and it will therefore procure the more regard to it.

Ver. 23—34. The external acts are not the whole, nor the principal part of what is done at this holy ordinance of the Lord's ſupper, each of them hath a ſignificancy. Our Saviour having undertaken to make an offering of himſelf to God, and procure by his death the remiſſion of ſins, with all other goſpel-benefits, for true believers, did at the inſtitution deliver his body and blood, with all the benefits procured by his death to his diſciples, and continues to do the ſame every time the ordinance is adminiſtered to true believers. And this is here exhibited and ſet forth as the food of ſouls. And as food, though ever ſo wholeſome or rich, will yield no nouriſhment without being eaten, here the communicants are *to take and eat*, or to receive Chriſt and feed upon him, his grace and benefits, and by faith convert them into nouriſhment to their ſouls.

They are to take him as their Lord and life, yield themſelves up to him, and live upon him. *He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh*

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damnation to himself, is a paſſage which the Holy Spirit never indited to deter ſerious chriſtians from their duty, though the devil has often made this advantage of it, and robbed good chriſtians of their choiceſt comforts.

The Corinthians came to the table of the Lord as to a common feaſt, *not diſcerning the Lords body*, i. e. not making a difference or diſtinction between that and common food, but ſetting both on a level. Nay they uſed much more indecency at this *sacred feast*, than they would have done at *a civil one*. This was very ſinful in them, and very diſpleaſing to God, and brought down his judgments on them. *For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep*. Some were puniſhed with ſickneſs, and ſome with death.

Note, Careleſs and irreverent receiving the Lord's ſupper may bring temporal puniſhments. Yet the connection ſeems to imply, that even thoſe who were thus puniſhed, were in a ſtate of favour with God, at leaſt many of them. *They were chastened of the Lord, that they should not be condemned with the world*. Now divine chaſtening is a ſign of divine love. *Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth*, Heb. xii. 6. eſpecially with ſo merciful a purpoſe as preventing their final condemnation. In the midſt of judgment God remembers mercy. He many times puniſhes thoſe whom he tenderly loves. It is kindneſs to uſe the rod to prevent the child's ruin.

CHAP. XII.

Ver. 12—26. All who have the Spirit of Christ, without difference, are the members of Christ, whether Jew or Gentile, bond or free, and none but such. And all the members of Christ make up one body. The members many, but the body one. They are one body, because they have one principle of life. All are quickened and animated by the same Spirit.

As in the natural body the pain of the one part afflicts the whole, the ease and pleasure of one part affects the whole; so should christians reckon themselves honoured in the honours of their fellow-christians, and should suffer in their sufferings. Christian sympathy is a great branch of christian duty. We should be so far from slighting our brethren's sufferings, that we should suffer with them; so far from envying their honours, that we should rejoice in them, and reckon ourselves honoured by them.

Ver. 27—31. Mutual indifference, and much more contempt, and hatred, and envy, and strife, are very unnatural in christians. It is like the members of the same body being destitute of all concern for one another, or quarrelling with each other.

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CHAP. XIII.

Ver. 1—3. Here the apoſtle ſhews what more excellent way he meant or had in view in the cloſe of the former chapter, viz. *charity*, or as it is commonly elſewhere rendered *love*. Not what is meant by charity in our common uſe of the word, which moſt men underſtand of *alms-giving*; but love in its fulleſt and moſt extenſive meaning. True love to God and man. A benevolent diſpoſition of mind towards our fellow-chriſtians, growing out of ſincere and fervent devotion to God. This living principle of all duty and obedience, is the more excellent way of which the apoſtle ſpeaks: preferable to all gifts. Nay, without this, the moſt glorious gifts are nothing; of no account to us, of no eſteem in the ſight of God.

A clear and deep head, is of no ſignification without a benevolent and charitable heart. It is not great knowledge which God ſets a value upon, but true and hearty devotion and love.

Our doing good to others will do none to us, if it be not well done, viz. from a principle of devotion and charity, love to God and good-will to men. If we leave charity out of religion, the moſt coſtly ſervices will be of no avail to us. If we give away all we have, whilſt we withhold the heart from God, it will not profit.

The moſt grievous ſufferings, the moſt coſtly ſacrifices, will not recommend us to God, if we do not love the brethren.

Should we give our own bodies to be burnt it would not profit us. How ſtrange a way of recommending themſelves to God are they got into, who hope to do it by burning others, by murdering and maſſacreing, and tormenting their fellow-chriſtians; or by any injurious uſage of them! *My ſoul enter not thou into their ſecret.* If I cannot hope to recommend myſelf to God, by giving mine own body to be burnt, whilſt I have no charity; I will never hope to do it by burning or maltreating others, in open defiance of all charity.

Ver. 4—7. Charity believes and hopes well of others. It is apt to believe well of all, to entertain a good opinion of them when there is no appearance to the contrary; nay, to believe well when there may be ſome dark appearances, if the evidence of ill be not clear. All charity is full of candor, apt to make the beſt of every thing, and put on it the beſt face and appearance. It will judge well and believe well, as far as it can with any reaſon; and rather ſtretch its faith beyond appearances for the ſupport of a kind opinion. But it will go into a bad one with the utmoſt reluctance, and ſence againſt it as much as it fairly and honeſtly can. And when, in ſpite of inclination, it cannot believe well of others, it will yet *hope well*, and continue to hope as long as there is any ground for it.

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CHAP. XIV.

Ver. 6—14. It ſhould be the concern of ſuch as pray in public, to pray intelligibly; not in a foreign language, nor in a language which, if it be not foreign, is above the level of their audience. Language which is moſt obvious and eaſy to be underſtood, is the moſt proper for public devotions, and other religious exerciſes.

Ver. 15—20. A truly chriſtian miniſter will value himſelf much more upon doing the leaſt ſpiritual good to men's ſouls, than upon procuring the greateſt applauſe and commendation to himſelf. This is true grandeur and nobleneſs of ſpirit. It is acting up to his character. It is approving himſelf the ſervant of Chriſt, and not a vaſſal to his own pride and vanity.

Chriſtians ſhould be harmleſs and inoffenſive as children, void of all guile and malice; but ſhould have wiſdom and knowledge that is ripe and mature. *They should not be unskilful in the word of righteousness*, Heb. v. 13. though they ſhould be unskilful in all the arts of miſchief.

Ver. 21—25. Religious exerciſes in chriſtian aſſemblies ſhould be ſuch as are fit to edify the faithful, and convince, affect, and convert unbelievers. The miniſtry was not inſtituted to make oſtentation of gifts and parts, but to ſave ſouls.

Ver. 36—40. Manifeſt indecencies and diſorders are to be carefully kept out of all chriſtian churches, and every part of divine worſhip. They ſhould have nothing in them which is childiſh, abſurd, ridiculous, wild or tumultuous; but all parts of divine worſhip ſhould be carried on in a manly, grave, rational, compoſed, and orderly manner. God is not to be diſhonoured, nor his worſhip diſgraced, by our unbecoming and diſorderly performance of it, and attendance at it.

CHAP. XV.

Ver. 1—11. The doctrine of Chriſt's death and reſurrection is at the foundation of chriſtianity. Remove this foundation, and the whole fabric falls. All our hopes for eternity ſink at once: and it is by holding this truth firm that chriſtians are made to ſtand in the day of trial, and kept faithful to God.

It is God's prerogative to ſay, *I am that I am.* It is our privilege to be able to ſay, *by God's grace we are what we are.* We are nothing but what God makes us: nothing in religion but what his grace makes us. All that is good in us, is a ſtream from this fountain. Paul was ſenſible of this, and was kept humble and thankful by this conviction. So ſhould we.

Ver. 20—34. Chriſt's reſurrection is a pledge and earneſt of our's, if we are true believers in him. Becauſe he is riſen, we ſhall riſe. We are a part

of the consecrated *lump*, and shall partake of the acceptance and favour vouchsafed the *first fruits*.

Ver. 51—57. The sting of death is sin; but Christ, by dying, has taken out this sting. He has made atonement for sin: he has obtained remission of it. It may hiss therefore; but it cannot hurt. It is altogether owing to the grace of God in Christ, that sin is pardoned and death disarmed. The law puts arms into the hand of death to destroy the sinner; but pardon of sin takes away this power from the law, and deprives death of its strength and sting.

CHAP. XVI.

Ver. 1—4. The good examples of other christians and churches should stir in us an holy emulation. It is becoming a christian not to bear to be outdone by a fellow-christian in any thing virtuous and praiseworthy, provided this consideration only makes him *exert* himself, and not *envy* others. And the more advantages we have above others, the more should we endeavour to exceed them. The church of Corinth should not be outdone in this service of love by the churches of Galatia, who do not appear to have been enriched with equal *spiritual gifts* or *outward* ability.

God expects that our beneficence to others should hold some proportion to his bounty to us. All we have is from God; the more he gives (circumstances being considered) the more he enables us to give,

and the more he expects we ſhould give: that we ſhould give more than others who *are* leſs able; that we ſhould give more than ourſelves when we *were* leſs able. And on the other hand from him to whom God gives leſs, he expects leſs. He is no tyrant or cruel task-maſter, to exact brick without ſtraw, or expect men ſhould do more good than he gives ability. No, *Where there is a willing mind, he accepts acccording to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not,* 2 Cor. viii. 12.

Ver. 19—24. Chriſtianity does by no means deſtroy civility and good manners. Paul could find room in an epiſtle, treating of very important matters, to ſend the ſalutation of friends. Religion ſhould promote a courteous and obliging temper to all. They miſrepreſent and reproach it who would take an encouragement from it to be ſour and moroſe. Some of theſe *salute them much in the Lord.* Note, Chriſtian-ſalutations are not empty compliments. They carry in them real expreſſion of good-will, and are attended with hearty recommendations to the Divine grace and bleſſing.

They who do not love the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, muſt periſh without remedy. *The wrath* of God abides on every one who believes not on the Son, John iii. 36. And true faith in Chriſt will evermore be productive of ſincere love to him.

II. CORINTHIANS.

IN his former epiſtle the apoſtle had ſignified his intention of *coming to Corinth as he passed through Macedonia*, chap. xvi. 6. but being providentially hindered for ſome time, he writeth this ſecond epiſtle to them about a year after the former, and among divers other things very obſervable in this epiſtle, there ſeem to be theſe two great urgent occaſions for it.

1. The caſe of the inceſtuous perſon that lay under cenſure, required that with all ſpeed he ſhould be reſtored and received again into communion. This therefore he giveth directions about, chap. ii. and afterwards chap. vii. he declared the ſatisfaction he had upon the intelligence he received of their good behaviour in that affair.

2. There was a contribution now making for the poor ſaints at Jeruſalem, which he exhorteth the Corinthians to join in, chap. viii. and 9.

CHAP. I.

Ver. 3—6. *All* our comforts come *from* God, and our *sweetest* comforts are in him.

Note, 1. What favours God beſtoweth on us are intended, not only to make us *chearful ourselves*, but alſo that we may be *uſeful* to others.

2. If we do imitate the faith and patience of good men in their afflictions, we may hope to partake of their *consolations* here, and their *salvation* hereafter.

Ver. 7—11. God often bringeth his people into great ſtraits, that they may apprehend their own *insufficiency* to help themſelves, and might be induced to place their truſt and hope in his *all-sufficiency*. Our extremity is God's opportunity.

Paſt experiences are great encouragements to faith and hope, and they lay great obligations to truſt in God for time to come. We reproach our experiences if we diſtruſt God in future ſtraits, who hath delivered us in former troubles.

Our truſting in God muſt not ſuperſede the uſe of any proper and appointed means; and prayer is one of thoſe means.

Ver. 12—14. The teſtimony of conſcience for us, if that be right and upon good grounds, will be matter of rejoicing at all times and in all conditions.

Bad men are falſe; good men are fickle; but *God is true*, neither fickle nor falſe.

The veracity of God, the mediation of Chriſt, and the operation of the Spirit, are all engaged that the promiſes ſhall be ſure to all the ſeed, and the accomplishment of them ſhall be to the *glory of God*, for the glory of his rich and ſovereign grace, and never-failing truth and faithfulneſs.

CHAP. II.

Ver. 5—11. Not only was there danger leſt Satan ſhould get an advantage of the *penitent* by driving him to deſpair; but againſt the *churches* alſo, and the apoſtles or miniſters of Chriſt, by repreſenting them as too rigid and ſevere, and ſo frighten people from coming among them.

In this, as in other things, *wisdom is profitable to direct*, ſo to manage according as the caſe may be, that the *ministry may not be blamed* for indulging ſin on the one hand, or for too great ſeverity towards ſinners on the other.

Ver. 12—17. Note, 1. A believer's triumphs are all *in Christ*. In ourſelves we are weak, and have neither joy nor victory; but in Chriſt, we may rejoice and triumph.

2. True believers have *constant cause* of triumph in Chriſt, for they are more than conquerors through him that hath loved them, Rom. viii. 37.

3. *God causeth* them to triumph in Chriſt. It is God who hath given us *matter* for triumph, and

hearts to triumph. To him therefore be the praiſe and glory of all.

4. The good ſucceſs of the goſpel is a good reaſon for a chriſtian's joy and rejoicing.

Faithful miniſters ſhall be accepted of God whatever their ſucceſs be. *We are*, if faithful, *unto God* a ſweet ſavour of Chriſt, in them that are *saved*, and in them alſo that *perish*. God will accept of ſincere intentions and honeſt endeavours, though with many they are not ſucceſsful. Miniſters ſhall be accepted and recompenſed, not according to their ſucceſs, but according to their fidelity.

CHAP. III.

Ver. 1—5. There is nothing more delightful to faithful miniſters, nor more to their commendation, than the ſucceſs of their miniſtry evidenced in the hearts and lives of them amongſt whom they labour.

Ver. 6—11. The Old Teſtament diſpenſation was the *ministration of death*; whereas that of the New Teſtament is the *ministration of life*. The law diſcovered ſin and the wrath and curſe of God, which ſhewed us a God *above* us, and a God *against* us; but the goſpel diſcovereth grace and *Emanuel*, God *with* us. Upon this account the goſpel is more glorious than the law, and yet that had a glory in it, witneſs the ſhining of Moſes's face, as an indication thereof, when he came down from the mount, with

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Ver. 12—18. We ſhould not reſt contented without an experimental knowledge of the transforming power of the goſpel, by the operation of the Spirit, bringing us into a conformity to the temper and tendency of the glorious goſpel of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt.

CHAP. IV.

Ver. 8—18. Whatever condition the children of God may be in in this world, they have a *but not* to comfort themſelves with. Their caſe is ſometimes bad, yea very bad; but not *so bad* as it might be.

The grace of faith is a ſovereign cordial, and effectual antidote againſt fainting fits in troublous times.

The ſufferings of Chriſt's miniſters, as well as their preaching and converſation, are intended for the good of the church and the glory of God.

The apoſtle and his fellow-ſufferers ſaw their afflictions *working* towards heaven, and that there they would end at laſt. Whereupon they weighed things aright in the balance of the ſanctuary. They did as it were put the heavenly glory in one ſcale, and their earthly ſufferings in the other; and pondering things in their thought they found afflictions to be *light*, and the glory of heaven to be *a far more exceeding weight*. That which ſenſe was ready to pronounce

heavy and long, grievous and tedious; faith perceived to be *light* and ſhort, but *for a moment*. On the other hand the worth and weight of the crown of glory, as it is exceeding great in itſelf, ſo it is eſteemed to be by the believing ſoul: it far exceeds all his expreſſions and thought; and it will be a ſpecial ſupport in our ſufferings, when we can perceive them appointed as the way, and preparing us for the enjoyment of the future glory.

CHAP. V.

Ver. 1—11. *Faith* is for this world, and *ſight* is reſerved for the other world: and it is our duty, and will be our intereſt to walk by faith, till we come to live by ſight.

Ver. 16—21. Regenerating grace creates a new world in the ſoul; all things are new. The renewed man acteth from new principles, by new rules, with new ends, and in new company.

Note, 1. As Chriſt, who knew no ſin of *his own*, was made ſin for us, ſo we who have no righteouſneſs of *our own* are made the righteouſneſs of God in him.

2. Our reconciliation to God is *only* through Jeſus Chriſt, and for the ſake of his merit: on him therefore we muſt rely, and make mention of his righteouſneſs, and his only.

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CHAP. VII.

Ver. 5—11. There ſeemeth to be a connection between chap. ii. 13. (when the apoſtle ſaid he had *no rest in his spirit* when he found not Titus at Troas) and the 5th verſe of this chapter: and ſo great was his affection to the Corinthians, and his concern about their behaviour in relation to the inceſtuous perſon, that in his further travels he had no reſt till he heard from them. And now he tells them; how greatly he was rejoiced at their repentance, and the evidences thereof. The offender had great ſorrow, he was in danger of being *swelled up with over-much sorrow;* and the ſociety was greatly ſorrowful; which before was *puffed up:* and this ſorrow of theirs was after *a godly manner*, or according to God (as it is in the original) i. e. it was according to the will of God, and tending to the glory of God, and wrought by the Spirit of God. It was a godly ſorrow, becauſe a ſorrow for ſin as an offence againſt God, an inſtance of ingratitude, and a forfeiture of God's favour. There is a great difference between this ſorrow of a godly ſort, and the *sorrow of this world.* Godly ſorrow produceth repentance and reformation, and will end in ſalvation; but worldly ſorrow *worketh death.* The ſorrows of worldly men for worldly things will bring down gray hairs the ſooner to the grave; and ſuch a ſorrow even for ſin as Judas had will have

fatal conſequences, as his had, which wrought death.

Note, 1. That repentance will be attended with ſalvation. Therefore,

2. True penitents will never repent that they have repented, nor of any thing that was conducive thereto.

3. Humiliation and godly ſorrow is previouſly neceſſary in order to repentance, and both of them are from God the giver of all grace.

Ver. 12—16. There is great comfort and joy that followeth upon godly ſorrow. As ſin occaſions general grief, ſo repentance and reformation occaſions general joy. Paul was glad, and Titus was glad, and the Corinthians were comforted, and the *penitent* ought to be comforted; and well may all this joy be on *earth* when there is joy in *heaven* over one ſinner that repenteth.

CHAP. VIII.

Ver. 7.—15. The beſt arguments for chriſtian duties, are thoſe that are taken from the love of Chriſt, *that constraineth us.*

The example of the churches of Macedonia was ſuch as the Corinthians ſhould imitate: but the example of our *Lord Jesus Christ* ſhould have much greater influence. And *ye know*, ſaith the apoſtle, *the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he*

was rich, as being God equal in power and glory with the Father, rich in all the glory and bleſsedneſs of the upper world, *yet for your sakes he became poor;* not only did become *man* for us, but he became *poor* alſo. He was born in poor circumſtances, lived a poor life, and died in poverty; and this was for our ſakes, that we thereby might *be made rich;* rich in the love and favour of God; rich in the bleſsings and promiſes of the new covenant; rich in the hopes of eternal life, being heirs of the kingdom. This is a good reaſon why we ſhould be charitable to the poor out of what we have, becauſe we ourſelves live upon the charity of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt.

CHAP. IX.

Ver. 6—15. What is given to the poor, in a right manner, is far from being loſt; as the precious ſeed which is caſt into the ground is not loſt, though it is buried there for a time; for it will ſpring up and bear fruit, the ſower ſhall receive it again with increaſe. Such good returns may they expect who give freely and liberally in charity.

Works of charity are ſo far from impoveriſhing us, that they are the proper means truly to enrich us, or make us truly rich.

Note, 1. True chriſtianity is a ſubjection to the goſpel, a yielding ourſelves to the commanding influence of its truths and laws.

2. We muſt evidence the ſincerity of our ſubjection to the goſpel by works of charity.

3. This will be for the credit of our profeſſion, and to the praiſe and glory of God.

4. Thoſe whoſe wants were ſupplied would make the beſt returns they were able, by ſending up many prayers to God for thoſe who had relieved them. And thus ſhould we recompence the kindneſſes we receive, when we are not in a capacity of recompenſing them any other way; and as this is the only recompence the poor can make, ſo it is many times greatly for the advantage of the rich.

CHAP. XII.

Ver. 1—10. Paul himſelf, who had been in the third heaven, did not publiſh to the world what he had heard there, but adhered to the doctrine of Chriſt. On that foundation the church is built; and on that we muſt build our faith and hope.

It is an excellent thing to have a lowly ſpirit in the midſt of high advancements; and thoſe who abaſe themſelves ſhall be exalted.

When God's people communicate their experiences, let them always remember to take notice of what God hath done to keep them humble, as well as what he hath done in favour to them, and for their advancement.

Prayer is a ſalve for every ſore, a remedy for every malady; and when we are afflicted with thorns in the

flesh, we should *give ourselves to prayer*. Therefore are we sometimes tempted, that we may learn to pray. *The apostle besought the Lord thrice, that the messenger of Satan might depart from him.*

Note, Though afflictions are sent for spiritual benefit, yet we may pray to God for the removal of them. We ought indeed to desire also that they may reach the end for which they are designed. The apostle prayed earnestly, and repeated his requests, he besought the Lord *thrice*, i. e. often. So that if an answer be not given to the *first* prayer, nor to the *second;* we must hold on, and hold out till we receive an answer. Christ himself prayed to his Father *thrice*. As troubles are sent to teach us to pray, so they are continued to teach us to *continue instant in prayer*.

As the apostle prayed earnestly to God for the removal of this sore grievance, so we have an account of the answer given to his prayer; that although the trouble was not removed, yet an equivalent should be granted; *My grace is sufficient for thee.*

Note, 1. Though God accepteth the prayer of faith, yet he doth not always answer it in the letter: as he sometimes granteth in wrath, so he sometimes denieth in love.

2. That when God doth not remove our troubles and temptations, yet if he give us *grace sufficient* for us, we have no reason to complain, or to say he dealeth ill with us. It is a great comfort to us, whatever thorns in the flesh we are pained with, God's

grace is ſufficient for us. Grace ſignifieth two things:

1. The *good will* of God *towards* us; and that is enough to enlighten and enliven us, ſufficient to ſtrengthen and comfort us, to ſupport our ſouls and chear up our ſpirits in all afflictions and diſtreſſes.

2. The *good work* of God in us, the grace we receive from the fulneſs that is in Chriſt our head; and from him there ſhall be communicated that which is ſuitable and ſeaſonable, and *ſufficient* for his members. Chriſt Jeſus underſtands our caſe, and knows our need, and will proportion the remedy to our malady, and not only ſtrengthen *us*, but glorify *himself*.

CHAP. XIII.

Ver. 11—14. In taking his leave of the Corinthians, the apoſtle giveth them ſeveral good exhortations.

1. To be *perfect*, or to be knit together in love, which would tend greatly to their benefit and advantage, as a church or chriſtian ſociety.

2. To be of *good comfort* under all the ſufferings and perſecutions they might endure for the cauſe of Chriſt, or any calamities and diſappointments they might meet with in the world.

3. To be *of one mind*, which would greatly tend to their comfort; the more eaſe we ſhall have in our own ſouls. The apoſtle would have them, as

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far as was poſſible, to be of the ſame opinion and judgment: however, if this could not be attained, yet,

4. He exhorteth them *to live in peace*, that difference in opinion ſhould not cauſe an alienation of affection; that they ſhould be at peace among themſelves. He encourageth them with the promiſe of God's preſence among them. *The God of love and peace shall be with you.*

Note, 1. God is the God of love and peace. He is the author of peace and lover of concord.

2. God will be with them that live in love and peace. He will love them that love peace: he will dwell with them here, and they ſhall dwell with him for ever. Such ſhall have God's *gracious* preſence here, and be admitted to his *glorious* preſence hereafter.

GALATIANS.

THIS epiſtle of Paul is directed, not to the church or churches of a ſingle city, as ſome others are; but of a country or province, for ſo Galatia was. It is very probable, that theſe Galatians were firſt converted to the chriſtian faith by his miniſtry; but if he was not the inſtrument of planting, yet at leaſt he had been employed in watering theſe churches, as is evident from this epiſtle itſelf, and alſo from Acts xviii. 23. where we find him going over all the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, ſtrengthening all the diſciples.

While he was with them they had expreſſed the greateſt eſteem and affection both for his perſon and miniſtry; but he had not been long abſent from them before ſome Judaizing teachers got in among them, by whoſe arts and inſinuations they were ſoon drawn into a meaner opinion both of the one and of the other.

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That which these false teachers chiefly aimed at, was to draw them off from the truth as it is in Jesus, particularly in the great doctrine of justification, which they grosly perverted by asserting the necessity of joining the observation of the law of Moses with faith in Christ in order to it; and the better to accomplish this their design, they did all they could to lessen the character and reputation of the apostle, and to raise up their own on the ruin of his; representing him as one who, if he were to be owned as an apostle, yet was much inferior to othesr, and particularly, who deserved not such a regard as Peter, James and John, whose followers, it is likely, they pretended to be; and in both these attempts they had but too great success.

This was the occasion of his writing this epistle; wherein he expresses his great concern that they had suffered themselves to be so soon turned aside from the faith of the gospel; vindicates his own character and authority, as an apostle, against the aspersions of his enemies; shewing that his mission and doctrine were both divine, and that he was not, upon any account, *behind the very chief of the apostles*, 2 Cor. xi. 5. He then sets himself to assert and maintain the great gospel-doctrine of justification by faith, without the works of the law, and to obviate some difficulties that might be apt to arise in their minds concerning it: and having established this important doctrine,

he exhorts them to ſtand faſt in the liberty wherewith Chriſt had made them free, cautions them againſt the abuſe of this liberty, gives them ſeveral very needful counſels and directions; and then concludes the epiſtle with giving them the true character of thoſe falſe teachers by whom they had been enſnared; and, on the contrary, juſtify his own temper and behaviour. In all which his great ſcope and deſign was, to recover thoſe that had been perverted, to ſettle thoſe that might be wavering, and to confirm ſuch among them as had kept their integrity.

CHAP. I.

Ver. 10—24. Paul did not in his doctrine accommodate himſelf to the humours of perſons, either to gain their *affection*, or avoid their *resentment*; but his great care was to approve himſelf to God. He was not ſo ſolicitous to pleaſe them, or to mitigate their rage againſt him, as to alter the doctrine of Chriſt, either to gain their *favour*, or to avoid their *fury*: and he gives this very good reaſon for it, that *if he yet pleased men, he should not be the servant of Christ*. Theſe he knew were utterly inconſiſtent, and that no man could ſerve two ſuch maſters; and therefore, though he would not needleſsly diſpleaſe any, yet he dare not allow himſelf to gratify men at

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the expence of his faithfulneſs to Chriſt. Thus from the ſincerity of his aims and intentions in the diſcharge of his office, he proves that he was truly an apoſtle of Chriſt: and from this his temper and behaviour we may note,

1. That the great end which miniſters of the goſpel ſhould aim at, is to bring men to God.

2. That they who are faithful will not ſeek to pleaſe men, but to approve themſelves to God.

3. That they muſt not be ſolicitous to pleaſe men, if they would approve themſelves faithful ſervants of Chriſt.

CHAP. II.

Ver. 1—10. The Chriſtians of Judea were at that time labouring under great wants and difficulties, and the apoſtles, out of compaſſion to them and concern for them, recommended their caſe to Paul, that he ſhould uſe his intereſt with the Gentile churches to procure a ſupply for them. This was but a reaſonable requeſt, *for if the gentiles were made partakers of their ſpiritual things, it was their duty to minister to them in carnal things*, as Rom. xv. 27. And he very readily falls in with it, whereby he ſhewed his charitable and catholic diſpoſition; how ready he was to own the Jewiſh converts as brethren, though many of them could ſcarce allow the like favour to the converted Gentiles; and that

mere difference of opinion was no reaſon with him why he ſhould not endeavour to relieve and help them. And herein he hath given us an excellent pattern of chriſtian charity, and has taught us that we ſhould by no means confine it to thoſe who are juſt of the ſame ſentiment with us; but be ready to extend it to all whom we have reaſon to look upon as the diſciples of Chriſt.

Ver. 11—21. Though the apoſtle was *dead to the law*, yet he does not look upon himſelf as *without law*. He had renounced all hopes of juſtification by the works of it, and was unwilling any longer to continue under the bondage of it, but he was far from thinking himſelf diſcharged from his duty to God: on the contrary, he was dead to the law, *that he might live unto God*. The doctrine of the goſpel, which he had embraced, inſtead of weakening the bond of duty upon him, did but the more ſtrengthen and confirm it; and therefore though he was dead to the law, yet it was only in order to his having a new and better life to God, as Rom. vii. 4, 6. a life of faith in Chriſt, and, under the influence thereof, of holineſs and righteouſneſs towards God.

CHAP. III.

Ver. 6—18. The condition of life by the law is perfect, perſonal, and perpetual obedience. The language of it is, Do this and live; and for every failure it denounces a curſe. Unleſs our obedience be

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universal, continuing in all things that are written in the book of the law, and unless it be *perpetual* too; if in any instance at any time we fail and come short, we fall under the curse of the law. The curse is wrath revealed and ruin threatened. It is a separation unto all evil, and this is in full force, power and virtue against all sinners, and therefore against all men; for all have sinned, and are become guilty before God. And if, as transgressors of the law, we are under the curse of it, it must be a vain thing to look for justification by it.

Note, 1. The misery which, as sinners, we are sunk into: we are under the curse and condemnation of the law.

2. The love and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ towards us: he has submitted to be made a curse for us, that he might redeem us from the curse of the law.

3. The happy prospect which we now have, through him, not only of escaping the curse, but of inheriting the blessing. And,

4. That it is only through faith in him, that we can hope to obtain this favour.

Ver. 19—29. The law was not intended to discover another way of justification different from that revealed by the promise, but only to lead men to see their need of the promise, by shewing them the sinfulness of sin; and to point them to Christ, through whom alone they could be pardoned and justified.

CHAP. IV.

Ver. 1—7. Note 1. That all who have the privilege of adoption, have the Spirit of adoption; all who are received into the number, partake of the nature of the children of God, for he will have all his children to resemble him.

2. That the Spirit of adoption is always the Spirit of prayer, and it is our duty in prayer to eye God as a Father: Christ hath taught us in prayer to eye God as our Father in heaven.

3. If we are his sons, then his heirs. It is not so among men, with whom the eldest son is heir; but all God's children are heirs: they that have the nature of sons shall have the inheritance of sons.

Ver. 12—16. Note, How uncertain the respects of people are, how apt they are to change their minds, and how easily they are drawn into a contempt of those for whom they once had the greatest esteem and affection, so that they are ready to pluck out the eyes of those for whom they would before have plucked out their own. We should therefore labour to be accepted of God, *for it is a small thing to be judged of man's judgment*, 1 Cor. iv. 3.

Note, 1. That it is no uncommon thing for men to account those their enemies who are really their best friends; for so to be sure those are, whether ministers or others, who tell them the truth, and deal freely and faithfully with them in matters relating to their eternal salvation, as the apostle now did with these christians.

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2. That miniſters may ſometimes create enemies to themſelves by the faithful diſcharge of their duty; for this was the caſe with Paul, he was accounted their enemy for telling them the truth.

3. That yet miniſters muſt not forbear ſpeaking the truth, for fear of offending others, and drawing their diſpleaſure upon them. And,

4. That they may be eaſy in their own minds, when they are conſcious to themſelves, that if others are become their enemies, it is only for telling them the truth.

Ver. 19—20. Note, 1. The very tender affection which faithful miniſters bear towards thoſe among whom they are employed, is like that of the moſt affectionate parents to their little children.

2. That the chief thing they are longing, and even travailing in birth for on their account, is that Chriſt may be formed in them: not ſo much that they may gain their affections, much leſs that they may make a prey of them, but that they may be renewed in the ſpirit of their minds, wrought into the image of Chriſt, and more fully ſettled and confirmed in the chriſtian faith and life: and how unreaſonable muſt thoſe people act, who ſuffer themſelves to be prevailed upon to deſert or diſlike ſuch miniſters?

3. That Chriſt is not fully formed in men till they are brought off from truſting in their own righteouſneſs, and made to rely only upon him and his righteouſneſs.

CHAP. V.

Ver. 13—26. Note, 1. That the liberty we enjoy as christians, is not a *licentious* liberty. Though Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, yet he has not freed us from the obligation of it; the gospel is *a doctrine according to godliness*, 1 Tim. vi. 3. and is so far from giving the least countenance to sin, that it lays us under the strongest obligations to avoid and subdue it.

2. That though we ought to stand fast in our *Christian liberty*, yet we should not insist upon it to the breach of *Christian charity*; we should not use it as an occasion of strife and contention with our fellow-christians, who may be differently minded from us; but should always maintain such a temper towards each other, as may dispose us by love to serve one another.

The flesh, i. e. the corrupt and carnal part of us, *lusteth*, i. e. strives and struggles with strength and vigour *against the Spirit*. It opposes all the motions of the Spirit, and resists every thing that is spiritual. On the other hand *the Spirit*, i. e. the renewed part of us, strives *against the flesh*, and opposes the will and desires of it: and from hence it comes to pass *that we cannot do the things that we would;* as the principle of grace in us will not suffer us to do all the evil which our corrupt nature would prompt us to, so neither can we do all the good that

we would, by reaſon of the oppoſitions we meet with from that corrupt and carnal principle. In a renewed man, there is a ſtruggle between the old nature and the new nature, the remainders of ſin and the beginnings of grace; and this chriſtians muſt expect will be their exerciſe as long as they continue in this world.

CHAP. VI.

Ver. 1—10. Note, 1. That though we have nothing in ourſelves *to boast of,* yet we may have matter of *rejoicing* in ourſelves. Our works can merit nothing at the hand of God; but if our conſciences can witneſs for us that they are ſuch as he for Chriſt's ſake approves and accepts, we may, upon good ground rejoice therein.

2. That the true way to have *rejoicing in ourselves*, is to be much in *proving our own works*; in examining ourſelves by the unerring rule of God's word, and not by the falſe meaſure of what others are, or may think of us.

3. That it is much more deſirable to have matter of glorying in *ourselves* than *in another*. If we have the teſtimony of our conſciences that we are accepted of God, we need not much concern ourſelves about what others think or ſay of us; and without this the good opinion of others will ſtand us in little ſtead.

The charity of christians should be extensive charity; but yet therein a particular respect is to be paid to good people. God doth good to all, but in an especial manner, he is good to his own servants; and we must in doing good be *followers of God as dear children.*

The rule which we are to observe in doing good to others is, *as we have opportunity.*

Note, 1. That as God has made it our duty to do good to others, so he takes care in his Providence to furnish us with opportunities for it. *The poor we have always with us,* Mat. xxvi. 11.

2. That whenever God gives us an opportunity to be useful to others he expects that we should improve it, according to our capacity and ability.

3. That we have need of godly wisdom and discretion to direct us in the exercise of our charity and beneficence, and particularly in the choice of the proper objects of it; for though none who stand in need of us are to be wholly overlooked, yet there is a difference to be made between some and others.

EPHESIANS.

THIS is an epiſtle that bears date out of a priſon: and ſome have obſerved that what this apoſtle wrote when he was a priſoner, had the greateſt reliſh and ſavour in it of the things of God. When his tribulations did abound, his conſolations and experiences did much more abound. From whence we may obſerve, that *the afflictive exercises of God's people, and particularly of his ministers, do oftentimes tend to the advantage of others as well as to their own.*

The apoſtle's deſign is to ſettle and eſtabliſh the Epheſians in the truth; and further to acquaint them with the myſtery of the goſpel in order to it. In the former part he repreſents the great privilege of the Epheſians, who being in time paſt idolatrous heathens, were now converted to chriſtianity, and received into covenant with God; which he illuſtrates

from a view of their deplorable ſtate before their converſion, chap. i. 2, 3. In the latter part (which we have in the 4th, 5th, and 6th chapters) he inſtructs them in the principal duties of religion, both perſonal and relative; and exhorts and quickens them to the faithful diſcharge of them. Zanchy obſerves, that we have here an epitome of the whole chriſtian doctrine, and of almoſt all the chief heads of divinity.

CHAP. I.

Ver. 3—14. Chriſt's ſatisfaction and God's rich grace are very conſiſtent in the great affairs of man's redemption. God was ſatisfied by Chriſt as our ſubſtitute and ſurety; but it was *rich grace* that would accept of a ſurety, when he might have executed the ſeverity of the law upon the tranſgreſſor: and it was *rich grace* to provide ſuch a ſurety as his own Son, and freely to deliver him up, when nothing of that nature could have entered into our thoughts, or have been any otherwiſe found out for us.

God gathers together in one all things in Christ. All the lines of divine revelation meet in Chriſt; all religion centers in him. Jews and Gentiles were united to each other by being both united to Chriſt. *Things in heaven, and things on earth,* are gathered

together in him. Peace made, correſpondence ſettled betwixt heaven and earth through him. The innumerable company of angels become one with the church through Chriſt.

The Spirit is the earnest of our inheritance. The earnest is part of payment, and it ſecures the full ſum. So is the gift of the Holy Ghoſt; all his influences and operations, both as a ſanctifier and comforter, are heaven begun, glory in the ſeed and bud. The Spirit's illumination is an *earnest* of everlaſting light; ſanctification is an *earnest* of perfect holineſs, and his comforts are earneſts of everlaſting joys.

Ver. 15—23. Chriſtians ſhould not think it enough to have warm affections, but they ſhould labour to have clear underſtandings: they ſhould be ambitious of being knowing chriſtians, and judicious chriſtians.

Beſides the heavenly inheritance prepared for the ſaints, there is a preſent inheritance *in* the ſaints: for grace is glory begun, and holineſs is happineſs in the bud.

CHAP. II.

Ver. 1—3. Every converted ſinner is a ſaved ſinner; ſuch are delivered from ſin and wrath; they are brought into a ſtate of ſalvation, and have a right given them by grace to eternal happineſs. The

grace that ſaves them is the free undeſerved goodneſs and favour of God; and he ſaves them not *by the works of the law*, but *through faith* in Chriſt Jeſus, by means of which they come to partake of the great bleſſings of the goſpel; and both that faith, and that ſalvation, on which it hath ſo great an influence, are *the gift* of God. The great objects of faith are made known by divine revelation, and made credible by the teſtimony and evidence which God hath given us; and that we believe to ſalvation, and obtain ſalvation through faith, is entirely owing to divine aſſiſtance and grace: God has ordered all, ſo that the whole ſhall appear to be of *grace*.

Ver. 14—22. Not only the univerſal church is called the temple of God, but particular churches; and even every true believer is a living temple, is *an habitation of God through the Spirit*. God dwells in all believers now: they being become the temple of God through the operations of the bleſſed Spirit; and his dwelling with them now is an earneſt of their dwelling together with him to eternity.

CHAP. III.

Ver. 1—13. *Unto me*, ſaith the apoſtle, *who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ*.

Obſerve in this verſe how humbly he ſpeaks of himſelf; and how highly he ſpeaks of Jeſus Chriſt.

1. How humbly he ſpeaks of himſelf. *I am less than the least of all saints.* St. Paul, who was the chief of the apoſtles, calls himſelf *less than the least of all saints;* he means on the account of his having been formerly a perſecutor of the followers of Chriſt. He was in his own eſteem as little as could be. What can be leſs than the leaſt? To ſpeak himſelf as little as could be, he ſpeaks himſelf leſs than could be. You may alſo obſerve in what a different manner the apoſtle ſpeaks of himſelf, and of his office. While he magnifies *that*, he debaſes himſelf. Obſerve, A faithful miniſter of Chriſt may be very humble, and think very meanly of himſelf, even when he thinks and ſpeaks very highly and honourably of his ſacred function.

2. How highly he ſpeaks of Jeſus Chriſt. *The unsearchable riches of Christ.* There is a mighty treaſury of mercy, grace, and love laid up in Chriſt Jeſus, and that for Jews and Gentiles both.

Ver. 14—21. Take notice how the apoſtle deſcribes God; and how he aſcribes glory to him. He deſcribes him as a God that is *able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.* There is an inexhauſtible fulneſs of grace and mercy in God, which the prayers of all the ſaints can never draw dry. Whatever we may ask, or think to ask, ſtill God is able to do more, abundantly more, exceedingly abundantly more.

Note, In our applications to God, we ſhould encou-

rage our faith by a consideration of his all-sufficiency and almighty power.

Observe, That the seat of God's praises is *in the church*. That small revenue of praise which God receives from this world, is from the church; a sacred society constituted for the glory of God; every particular member of which, both Jew and Gentile, does concur in this work of praising God. The *Mediator* of these praises is Jesus Christ. All God's gifts come from him to us through the hand of Christ; and all our praises pass from us to him, through the same hand. And God should and will be praised thus *throughout all ages, world without end*: for he will ever have a church to praise him, and he will ever have his tribute of praise from his church. *Amen*, So be it! and so it will certainly be.

CHAP. IV.

Ver. 2—16. The first verse contains a general exhortation to walk as becomes our christian profession. Here the apostle proceeds to more *particular* exhortations. *Two* he enlarges upon in this chapter, viz. To unity and purity, holiness and love, which christians should very much study. We do not *walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called*; if we be not faithful friends to all christians, and sworn enemies to all sin.

The best christians have need to bear one with another, and to make the best one of another; to pro-

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voke one another's graces, and not their paſſions. We find much in ourſelves, which it is hard to forgive ourſelves; and therefore me muſt not think it much if we find that in others, which we think hard to forgive them; and yet muſt forgive them as we forgive ourſelves.

While we adhere to the doctrine of Chriſt, which is the truth, we ſhould live in love one with another. Love is an excellent thing; but we muſt be careful to preſerve truth together with it. Truth is an excellent thing; yet it is requiſite that we ſpeak it in love, and not in contention. Theſe two ſhould go together, truth and peace

Ver. 17—32. The loſs of God's image upon the ſoul, was both the ſinfulneſs and miſery of man's fallen ſtate; and that reſemblance which it bears to God, is the beauty, the glory, and the happineſs of the new creature.

If we would be angry and not ſin, (ſays one) we muſt be angry at nothing but ſin.

Though anger in itſelf is not ſinful, yet there is the utmoſt danger of its becoming ſo, if it be not carefully watched and ſpeedily ſuppreſſed: and therefore though anger may *come into* the boſom of a wiſe man, *it rests* only *in the bosom of fools.*

Obſerve, Even thoſe who ſubſiſt by their labour ſhould be charitable out of their little to thoſe who are diſabled for labour. So neceſſary and incumbent a duty is it to be charitable to the poor, that even labourers and ſervants, and thoſe who have but little

for themſelves, muſt caſt their mite into the treaſury. God muſt have his dues, and the poor are his receivers.

Obſerve further, That thoſe alms which are like to be acceptable to God, muſt not be the produce of unrighteousneſs and robbery, but of honeſty and induſtry. God hates robbery for burnt-offerings.

CHAP. V.

Ver. 1, 2. As the atoning ſacrifice of Chriſt was efficacious with God; ſo his example ſhould be prevailing with us, and we ſhould carefully copy after it.

Ver. 3—20. We *partake with* other men in their ſins, not only when we live in the ſame ſinful manner that they do, and conſent and comply with their temptations and ſolicitations to ſin; but when we encourage them in their ſins, prompt them to them; and do not prevent and hinder them, as far as it may be in our power to do ſo.

We muſt prudently and in our places witneſs againſt the ſins of others, and endeavour to *convince* them of their ſinfulneſs, when we can do it ſeaſonably and pertinently, *in our words;* but eſpecially by the holineſs of our lives, and a religious converſation. Reprove their ſins by abounding in the contrary duties.

Ver. 21—33. Obſerve, As *the church's subjection* to Chriſt is an examplar to wives; ſo *the love of Christ to his church* is propoſed as a pattern

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to husbands: and while ſuch examplars are offered to both, and ſo much required of each, neither has reaſon to complain of the divine injunctions. The *love* which God requires from the husband in behalf of his wife, will make an amends for that *subjection* that he demands from her to her husband: and the preſcribed *subjection* of the wife, will be an abundant return for that *love* of the husband which God hath made her due.

CHAP. VI.

Ver. 10—18. Here is a chriſtian in complete armour; and the armour is divine. *Armour of God. Armour of light*, Rom xiii. 12. Armour of righteouſneſs, 2 Cor. 6, 7. The apoſtle inſtances in the particulars of this armour both offenſive and defenſive. Here is the military girdle or belt: the breaſt-plate: the greaves or ſoldiers' ſhoes: the ſhield; the helmet and the ſword. It is obſervable among them all, there is none for the back: if we turn our back upon the enemy we lie expoſed.

Ver. 19—24. Obſerve, The beſt and moſt eminent miniſters have need of, and may receive advantage by, the prayers of good chriſtians; and therefore ſhould earneſtly deſire them.

It is the undoubted character of all the ſaints that they love our Lord Jeſus Chriſt. Our love to Chriſt is not acceptable unleſs it be in ſincerity. Indeed there is no ſuch thing as love to Chriſt, whatever men may pretend, where there is not ſincerity.

PHILIPPIANS.

PHILIPPI was a chief city of the weſtern part of Macedonia, Acts xvi. 12. It took its name from Philip the famous king of Macedon, who repaired and beautified it; and was afterwards made a Roman colony. Near this place were the *Campi Philippici*, remarkable for the famous battles between Julius Cæſar, and Pompey the Great; and that between Auguſtus and Antony on the one ſide, and Caſſius and Brutus on the other. But it is moſt remarkable among chriſtians for this epiſtle, which was written when Paul was *priſoner* at Rome, A. D. 62.

St. Paul ſeems to have had a particular kindneſs for the church at Philippi, which he himſelf had been inſtrumental in planting; and though he had *the care of all the churches*, he had, upon that account, a particular *fatherly* tender care of this.

1. He was called in an *extraordinary* manner to preach the gospel at Philippi, Acts xvi. 9.

2. At Philippi he suffered hard things. He was *scourged* and put into the *stocks*, Acts xvi. 33. Yet he had not the less kindness for the place for the hard usage he met with there. We must never love our friends the less for the ill treatment which our enemies give us.

3. The *beginnings* of that church were very *small*. Lydia was converted there, and the jailor and a few more: yet that did not discourage him.

4. It seems by many passages in this epistle, that this church at Philippi grew to a *flourishing* church; and particularly was very kind to St Paul.

CHAP. I.

Ver. 3—6. As holy joy is the heart and soul of thankful praise; so thankful praise is the lip and language of holy joy.

Ver. 21—36. We have here an account of the life and death of blessed Paul: His life was Christ, and his death was gain.

Observe, 1. It is the undoubted character of every good Christian that to him to live is Christ. The

glory of Chrift ought to be the end of our life, the grace of Chrift the principle of our life, and the word of Chrift the rule of it. The chriftian life is derived from Chrift, and directed to him. He is the principal rule and end of it.

2. All thofe to whom to live is Chrift, to them to die *will be gain*. It is great gain, a prefent gain. Death is a great lofs to a carnal worldly man: for he lofes all his comforts and all his hopes: but to a good chriftian it is gain, for it is the end of all his weaknefs and mifery, and the perfection of his comforts, and accomplifhment of his hopes. It delivers him from all the evils of life, and brings him to the poffeffion of the chiefeft good.

See the power of faith and of divine grace; it can reconcile the mind to death, and make us willing to die, though death is the deftruction of our prefent nature, and the greateft natural evil.

They who know the value of Chrift and heaven, will readily acknowledge it far better to be in heaven than to be in this world, to be with Chrift than to be with any creature, for in this world we are compaffed about with fin, born to trouble, born again to it: but if we come to be with Chrift, farewell fin and temptation, farewell forrow and death for ever.

Ver. 27—30. Obferve, They who profefs the gofpel of Chrift fhould have their converfation as becomes the gofpel, or in a fuitablenefs and agreeablenefs to it. Let it be as becomes thofe who believe gofpel-truths, fubmit to gofpel-laws, and de-

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pend upon gospel-promises; and with an answerable faith, holiness and comfort. Let it be in all respects as those who belong to the *kingdom of God* among men, and are members and subjects of it. It is an ornament to our profession, when our conversation is of a piece with it.

CHAP. II.

Ver. 1—11. The apostle in this chapter presses the Philippians largely to *like-mindedness*, and *lowly-mindedness*, in conformity to the example of the Lord Jesus, the great pattern of *humility* and *love*.

Observe, the vast extent of the kingdom of Christ: it reaches to heaven and earth, and to all the creatures in each; to angels as well as men, and to the dead as well as the living.

Ver. 12—13. As there is no strength in us, so there is no merit in us. As we cannot act without God's grace, so we cannot claim it or pretend to deserve it. God's good will to us, is the cause of his good work in us; and he is under no engagements to his creatures but those of his gracious promise.

Ver. 14—18. It is our duty not only to hold fast, but to hold forth the word of life; not only to hold it fast for our own benefit, but to hold it forth for the benefit of others; to hold it forth as the candlestick holds forth the candle, which makes it appear

to advantage all around, or as the luminaries of the heavens, which ſhed their influence far and wide.

CHAP. III.

Ver. 1—3. It is the character and temper of ſincere chriſtians to *rejoice* in Chriſt Jeſus. The more we take of the comfort of our religion, the more cloſely we ſhall cleave to it. The more we rejoice in Chriſt, the more willing we ſhall be to do and ſuffer for him; and the leſs danger we ſhall be in of being drawn away from him. *The joy of the Lord is our ſtrength*, Neh. viii. 9.

Ver. 4—8. Obſerve, The apoſtle did not perſuade them to do any thing but what he himſelf did; to quit any thing but what he had quitted himſelf; or venture upon any other bottom, but what he himſelf had ventured his immortal ſoul upon.

The apoſtle tells us what it was he was ambitious of and reached after. It was the *knowledge of Chriſt Jeſus his Lord:* a believing experimental acquaintance with Chriſt as Lord; not a mere notional and ſpeculative, but practical and efficacious knowledge of him. So knowledge is ſometimes put for faith: *By this knowledge*, or the knowledge of him, *shall my righteous ſervant juſtify many*, Iſa. liii. 11. And it is the *excellency* of knowledge. There is an abundant and tranſcendent excellence in the doctrine of Chriſt, or the chriſtian religion, above all the knowledge of nature, and improvements of human wiſ-

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dom; for it is ſuited to the caſe of fallen ſinners, and furniſhes them with all they need, and all they can deſire and hope for, with all ſaving wiſdom and ſaving grace.

Ver. 9—14. Obſerve, the apoſtle was as ambitious of being ſanctified, as he was of being juſtified. He was as deſirous to know the power of Chriſt's death and reſurrection killing ſin in him, and raiſing him up to newneſs of life, as he was to receive the benefit of Chriſt's death and reſurrection in his juſtification.

It is not our laying hold of Chriſt firſt, but his laying hold of us, which is our happineſs and ſalvation: nor our keeping hold of Chriſt, but his keeping hold of us which is our ſafety.

There is no getting to heaven as our home, but by Chriſt as our way.

Ver. 17—21. The life of a chriſtian is in heaven, where his head is and his home is, and where he hopes to be ſhortly.

CHAP. IV.

Ver. 1—9. The believing hope and proſpect of eternal life ſhould engage us to be ſteady and even, and conſtant in our chriſtian courſe.

It is our duty and privilege to *rejoice* in God, and to rejoice in him *always;* at all times, in all conditions: even when when we ſuffer for him or are afflicted by him.

There is a care of diligence which is our duty;

and consists in a wise forecast and due concern; but there is a care of diffidence and distrust which is our sin and folly, and which only perplexes and distracts the mind, *Be careful for nothing*, so as by your care to *distrust God*, and unfit yourselves for his service.

Observe, Paul's doctrine and life were of a piece. What they *saw* in him, was the same thing with what they heard from him. He could propose himself as well as his doctrine to their imitation. It gives a great force to what we say to others, when we can appeal to what they have seen in us.

And this is the way to have the *God of peace with us*, to keep close to our duty to him. *The Lord is with us while we are with him*..

Ver. 10—19. *I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound*, saith Paul. This is a special act of grace, to accommodate ourselves to every condition of life, and carry an equal temper of mind through all the varieties of our state.

1. To accommodate ourselves to an afflicted condition; to know how to be *abased*, how to be *hungry*, how to *suffer want*, so as not to be overcome by it, either to lose our comfort in God, or to distrust his Providence, or to take any indirect course for our own supply.

2. To a prosperous condition; to know how to *abound*, how to *be full*, so as not to be proud, or secure, or luxurious. And this is as hard a lesson as the other; for the temptations of fulness and prosperity are not less than those of afflictions and want.

COLOSSIANS.

COLOSSE was a conſiderable city of Phrygia, and probably not far from Laodicea and Hierapolis. We find theſe three mentioned together, chap iv. 13. It is now buried in ruin, and the memory of it chiefly preſerved in this epiſtle. The deſign of the epiſtle is to warn them of the danger of the Jewiſh zealots, who preſſed the neceſſity of obſerving the ceremonial law; and to fortify them againſt the mixture of the Gentile philoſophy with their chriſtian principles. He profeſſes a great ſatisfaction in their *steadfastness* and conſtancy, and encourages them to *perseverance*. It was writ about the ſame time, with the epiſtle to the Epheſians and Philippians, Anno Domini 62. and in the ſame place, while he was now priſoner at Rome. His was not idle in his confinement, and the word of God *was not bound*.

This epiſtle, like that to the Romans, was writ to thoſe whom he had never ſeen, nor had any perſonal acquaintance with.

The church planted at Coloſſe was not by Paul's miniſtry, but by the miniſtry of Epaphras or Epaphroditus, an evangeliſt, whom he delegated to preach the goſpel among the Gentiles; and yet,

1. There was a flouriſhing church at Coloſſe. One would have thought none ſhould have come to be flouriſhiug churches but they which Paul himſelf had planted; but here was a church planted by Epaphras.

2. Though Paul had not the planting of this church, yet he did not therefore neglect it; nor in writing his epiſtles does he make any difference between that and other churches. The Coloſſians, who were converted by the miniſtry of Epaphras, were as dear to him, and he as much concerned for their welfare, as the Philippians or any others who were converted by his miniſtry.

CHAP. I.

Ver. 12—29. God gives *grace and glory*, and we are here told what they both are.

1. What that glory is: It is the *inheritance of the saints in light*. It is an *inheritance*, and belongs to them as children, which is the beſt ſecurity, and the ſweeteſt tenure. *If children, then heirs*, Rom. viii. 17. And it is an inheritance of *the saints*, proper to ſanctified ſouls. They who are not ſaints on earth, will never be ſaints in heaven. And it is an

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inheritance *in light*; the perfection of knowledge, holineſs and joy, by communion with God, who is *light*, and the *Father of lights*, James i. 17, 1 John, i. 5.

2. What this grace is. It is a *meetness* for the inheritance. *He hath made us meet to be partakers*, i. e. ſuited and fitted us for the heavenly ſtate by a proper temper and habit of ſoul; and he makes us meet by the powerful influence of his Spirit.

Obſerve, that all who are deſigned for heaven hereafter, are *prepared* for heaven now. As they who live and die unſanctified, go out of the world with their hell about them; ſo they who are ſanctified and renewed, go out of the world with their heaven about them. This meetneſs for heaven is the earneſt of the Spirit in our heart; which is part of payment, and aſſures the full payment.

It pleased the Father that in Christ should all fulness dwell. Not only a fulneſs of abundance for himſelf, but redundance for us. A fulneſs of merit and righteouſneſs; of ſtrength and grace. As the head is the ſeat and ſource of the animal ſpirits, ſo is Chriſt of all graces to his people. It pleaſed the Father that all fulneſs ſhould dwell in him; and we may have free reſort to him for all that grace which we have occaſion for. He not only intercedes for it, but is the truſtee in whoſe hands it is lodged to diſpenſe to us. *Of his fulness we receive, and grace for grace*, grace in us anſwering to that grace which is in him, John i. 16.

CHAP. II.

Ver. 4—12. Note, 1. All christians have in profession at least *received Jesus Christ the Lord*; received him as Christ, the great prophet of the church, anointed by God to reveal his will; as Jesus the great High Priest and Saviour from sin and wrath, by the expiatory sacrifice of himself; and as Lord, or Sovereign and King, whom we are to obey and be subject to.

2. The great concern of those who have received Christ, is to *walk in him*, i. e. to make their practices conformable to their principles, and their conversations agreeable to their engagements. As we have received Christ, or consented to be his; so we must walk with him in our daily course, and keep up our communion with him.

3. The more closely we walk with Christ, the more we are *rooted and established in the faith*. A good conversation is the best establishment of a good faith. If we walk in him, we shall be rooted in him; and the more firmly we are rooted in him, the more closely we shall walk in him; *rooted and built up*.

Ver. 13—15. Through Christ we, who were dead in sins, are *quickened*, i. e. effectual provision is made for taking away the *guilt* of sin, and breaking the power and dominion of it. *Quickened together with him*; by virtue of our union to him and in conformity to him. Christ's death was the death of

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our ſins; Chriſt's reſurrection is the quickening of our ſouls.

CHAP. III.

Ver. 5—11. Covetouſneſs is ſpiritual idolatry. It is giving that love and regard to worldly wealth which is due to God only, and carries a greater degree of malignity in it, and is more highly provoking to God than is commonly thought. And it is very obſervable, that among all the other inſtances of ſin which good men are recorded in the ſcripture to have fallen into; (and there is ſcarce any but ſome or other, in one or other part of their life, have fallen into;) there is no inſtance in all the ſcripture of any good man charged with covetouſneſs.

Chriſt is a chriſtian's all, his only Lord and Saviour, and all his hopes and happineſs.

Ver. 18—25. The apoſtle concludes the chapter with exhortations to relative duties, as before in the epiſtle to the Epheſians.

Thoſe epiſtles which are moſtly taken up in diſplaying the glory of the divine grace, and magnifying the Lord Jeſus, are the moſt particular and diſtinct in preſſing the duties of the ſeveral relations. We muſt never ſeparate the privileges and duties of the goſpel-religion.

CHAP. IV.

Ver. 2—4. The people muſt pray particularly for their miniſters, and bear them upon their hearts at all times at the throne of grace: q. d. Do not forget us whenever you pray for yourſelves. Ephe. vi. 19. 1 Theſſ. v. 25. Heb. xiii. 18. *That God would open to us a door of utterance.* Paul had been particular in telling the Coloſſians what he prayed for them, chap. i. Here he tells them particularly what he would have them pray for him. Paul knew as well as any man how to ſpeak, and yet he begs their prayers for him, that he might be taught *to speak*. The beſt and moſt eminent chriſtians need the prayers of meaner chriſtians, and are not above aſking them. The chief ſpeakers need prayer, that God would give then *a door of utterance*, and that they may ſpeak as they *ought to speak*.

Ver. 7—18. Particular mention is made of *Marcus' Sister's son to Barnabas*. This is ſuppoſed to be the ſame who wrote the goſpel which bears his name. *If he come unto you, receive him.*

Paul had a quarrel with Barnabas upon the account of this Mark, who was his nephew; *and thought it not good to take him with them because he departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work*, Acts xv. 38. He would

not take Mark with him, but took Silas, becauſe Mark had deſerted them; and yet Paul is not only reconciled to him himſelf, but recommends him to the reſpects of the churches, and gives a great example of a truly chriſtian and forgiving ſpirit. If men have been guilty of a fault, it muſt not be always remembered againſt them. We muſt forget as well as forgive *If a man be overtaken in a fault, ye who are spiritual restore such a one in the spirit of meekness*, Gal, vi. 1.

THESSALONIANS.

THESSALONICA was formerly the metropolis of Macedonia. It is now called Salonichi, and is the beſt peopled, and one of the beſt towns for commerce in the Levant. In this place Paul planted a church which conſiſted of ſome believing Jews, and many converted Gentiles, Acts xvii. 1---4. To this church he wrote this epiſtle, which, though it is placed after the other epiſtles of this apoſtle, is ſuppoſed to be the *first* in time of all Paul's epiſtles, and to be written about A. D. 51. The main ſcope thereof is to expreſs the thankfulneſs of this apoſtle for the good ſucceſs his preaching had among them, and to eſtabliſh them in the faith, and perſuade them to a holy converſation.

CHAP. I.

Ver. 1. As *all* good cometh from God, ſo *no* good can be hoped for by ſinners but from God in

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Chriſt. And the *best* good may be expected from God our Father for the ſake of Chriſt.

Ver. 2—5. Obſerve, 1. That all thoſe who in the fulneſs of time are effectually called and ſanctified, were from eternity elected and choſen to ſalvation.

2. That the election of God is of his own good pleaſure and mere grace, not for the ſake of any merit in them that are choſen.

3. That the election of God may be known by the fruits thereof.

4. That whenever we are giving thanks to God for his grace either to ourſelves or others, we ſhould run up the ſtreams to the fountain, and give thanks to God for his electing love, by which we are made to differ.

By this we may know our election, if we not only ſpeak of the things of God by rote as parrots; but feel the influence of thoſe things in our hearts, mortifying our luſts, and weaning us from the world, and raiſing us up to heavenly things.

Wherever the goſpel comes in power, it is to be attributed to the operation of the Holy Ghoſt; and unleſs the Spirit of God accompanies the word of God to render it effectual by his power, it will be to us but *as a dead letter; and the letter killeth, the Spirit giveth life.*

CHAP. II.

Ver. 7—12. The apoſtle had a moſt affectionate love to the perſons of the Theſſalonians, and ſought *them*, not *theirs;* themſelves, not their goods, and to *gain* them, not to be *gainer* by them; or to make a merchandiſe of them. It was their ſpiritual and eternal welfare and ſalvation that he was earneſtly deſirous of.

Obſerve, 1. What is our great *gospel-privilege*, that God hath called us to his kingdom and glory. The goſpel calls us *into* the kingdom and ſtate of *grace here*, and *unto the* kingdom and ſtate of *glory* hereafter: to heaven and happineſs as our *end*, and to holineſs as the *way* to that end.

2. What is our great *gospel-duty?* That we walk worthy of God: that the temper of our minds, and tenor of our lives, be anſwerable to this call, and ſuitable to this privilege.

Ver. 13—16. When the meaſure of any man's iniquity is full, and he hath ſinned to the uttermoſt, then cometh wrath, and that to the uttermoſt.

CHAP. III.

Ver. 1—5. Obſerve, 1. *The end and design* why Paul ſent Timothy to the Theſſalonians, which was to *establish them, and comfort them concerning their*

faith. Paul had converted them to the christian faith, and now he was desirous they might be confirmed and comforted: that they might be *confirmed* in the choice they had made of the christian religion, and be *comforted* in the profession and practice of it.

Note, The more we are *comforted*, the more we shall be *confirmed:* because when we find pleasure in the ways of God, we shall thereby be engaged to continue and persevere therein. The apostle's design was to establish and comfort the Thessalonians concerning *their faith.* Concerning the *object* of their faith, viz. the truths of the gospel; and particularly that Jesus Christ was the Saviour of the world, and so wise and good, so powerful and faithful, that they might rely upon him. Concerning the *recompence* of faith, which was more than sufficient to balance all their losses, and reward all their labours.

Ver. 11—13. Note 1. The Lord Jesus will certainly come, and come in his glory.

2. When he cometh his saints will come with him. *They shall appear with him in glory.*

3. Then the excellency as well as the necessity of holiness will appear; because without this no hearts shall be established at that day, nor shall any one be unblameable, or avoid everlasting condemnation.

CHAP. IV.

Ver. 1—8. Observe, the design of the gospel is not only to teach men what they should *believe*, but

alſo how they ought to *live:* not ſo much to fill men's mind's with notions, as to regulate their temper and behaviour. The apoſtle taught them how to walk, not how to talk.

Chriſtians ſhould not impoſe upon the ignorance and neceſſity of thoſe they deal with, and ſo *go beyond them*; nor ſhould they by equivocations or lying arts *defraud* them: and although this may be practiſed by ſome, and lie long undiſcovered, and ſo go unpuniſhed among men, yet the righteous God will *render a recompence.*

Ver. 13—18. It will be ſome part of the felicity of the ſaints in heaven, that they ſhall all *meet* together and *remain* together there for ever; but the principal happineſs of heaven is this, *to be with the Lord*, to *see* him, *live* with him, and *enjoy* him for ever.

This ſhould comfort the ſaints upon the death of their pious friends; that although death has made a ſeparation, yet their *souls and bodies* will meet again; *we and they* ſhall meet together again; we and they, with all the ſaints, ſhall meet *our Lord*, and *be* with him *for ever*; no more to be ſeparated, either from him or from one another for ever. And the apoſtle would have us, *comfort one another with these words.*

CHAP. V.

Ver. 11—15. Faithful miniſters ought to be ſo far from being lightly eſteemed becauſe of their

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work, that they ſhould be highly eſteemed on the account thereof. The work of the miniſtry is ſo far from being a diſgrace to them who upon other accounts deſerve eſteem, that it puts an honour upon them who are faithful and diligent, which otherwiſe they could lay no claim to; and will procure them that eſteem and love among good people, which otherwiſe they could not expect.

We muſt not be *high* in our *expectations* and *demands*, nor *harsh* in our *resentments*, nor *hard* in our *impositions;* but endeavour to make the beſt we can of every thing, and think the beſt we can of every body.

Ver. 16—22. The way to rejoice evermore, is to pray without ceaſing. We ſhould *rejoice* more, if we did but *pray* more.

We ſhould abſtain from evil, and all *appearances of evil;* from ſin, and that which *looks* like ſin, and that *leads* to it, and *borders* upon it. He that is not ſhy of the *appearances* of ſins, and who ſhuns not the *occasions* of ſin, and who avoids not the *temptations* and *approaches* to ſin, will not long abſtain from *the actual commission of sin.*

Ver. 23—28. *Our fidelity to God* depends upon *his faithfulness* to us.

We ſhould pray for one another; and *brethren* ſhould thus expreſs *brotherly love.* This great apoſtle did not think it beneath him to call the Theſſalonians brethren, nor below him to requeſt their prayers. Miniſters ſtand in need of their peo-

ple's prayers; and the more people do pray for their miniſters, the more good miniſters may have from God, and the people may receive by their miniſtry.

The public reading of the law was one part of the worſhip of the ſabbath among the Jews in their ſynagogues, and the ſcriptures ſhould be read in the public aſſemblies of chriſtians alſo.

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II. THESSALONIANS.

THIS ſecond epiſtle was written ſoon after the former, and ſeems to be deſigned to prevent their running into a miſtake, which might ariſe from ſome paſſages in the former epiſtle, concerning the ſecond coming of Chriſt, as if it were near at hand.

The apoſtle in this epiſtle is careful to prevent any wrong uſe, ſome among them might make of thoſe expreſſions of his, that were agreeable to the dialect of the prophets of the Old Teſtament; and informeth them that there were many intermediate counſels yet to be fulfilled before that day of the Lord ſhould come, though, becauſe it is ſure, he has ſpoken of it as near.

There are other things he writeth about for their conſolation under ſufferings, and exhortation and direction in duty.

CHAP. I.

Ver. 1—4. The introduction is in the ſame words as in the former epiſtle. From whence we may obſerve, That as this apoſtle did not count it grievous to him to *write* the ſame *things* (Phil. iii. 1.) in his epiſtles, that he had *delivered* in preaching, ſo he willingly wrote the ſame things to *one* church as he did to *another*. And here the ſame *words* in the ſecond epiſtle as in the former, ſheweth us, that miniſters ought not ſo much to regard the variety of expreſſion and elegancy of ſtyle, as the truth and uſefulneſs of the doctrines they preach: and great care ſhould be taken leſt, from an affectation of novelty in method and phraſes, we advance new notions or doctrines contrary to the principles of natural or revealed religion, upon which this church of the Theſſalonians was builded, as all true churches are; namely, *in God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ*.

The apoſtle giveth thanks that they were not only *true* chriſtians, but *growing* chriſtians. Note, That where there is the truth of grace there will be the increaſe of it. The path of the juſt is as the ſhining light, which ſhineth more and more unto the perfect day. And where there is the increaſe of grace, God muſt have all the glory of it. We may be tempted to think, that though when we were bad, we could not make ourſelves good, yet when we

are good we can easily make ourselves better; but we have as much dependence on the grace of God for increasing the grace we have, as for the planting of grace when we had it not.

CHAP. II.

Ver. 13—15. The apostle reckoned himself *bound in duty* to be thankful to God, on the behalf of the Thessalonians because of their election to God. Concerning which we may observe,

1. The *eternal date* thereof; it is from the *beginning;* not the beginning of the *gospel*, but the beginning of the *world*, before the foundation of the world, Ephe. i. 4.

Then, 2. The *end* to which they were chosen; and that is *salvation*, complete and eternal salvation from sin and misery, and the full fruition of all good.

3. The *means* in order to obtaining this end; namely, *sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth.* The decree of election therefore connecteth the end and the means, and these must not be separated. We are not elected of God *because* we were holy, but *that* we *might* be holy. There must be the belief of the truth, without which there can be no true sanctification, nor perseverance in grace, nor obtaining salvation. Faith and holiness must be joined together, as well as holiness and happiness; therefore our Saviour prayed for Peter, that his faith might not fail, Luke xxii. 32. and for his disciples,

John xvii. 17. Sanctify them by thy truth, thy word is truth.

CHAP. III.

Ver. 6—15. Observe, There must be work or labour in opposition to idleness, and there must be quietness in opposition to being busy-bodies in other men's matters. We must study to be quiet and do our own business. This is an excellent but rare composition, to be of an active yet quiet spirit; active in our own business, and yet quiet as to other people's.

Ver. 16—18. We shall neither have peaceable dispositions ourselves, nor find men disposed to be at peace with us, unless the God of peace give us both.

I. TIMOTHY.

HITHERTO Paul's Epiſtle's were directed to churches, now follow ſome to particular perſons; two to Timothy, one to Titus, and another to Philemon, all three miniſters. Timothy and Titus were evangeliſts, an inferior order to the apoſtles, as appears by that, Eph. iv. 11. *Some prophets, some apostles, some evangelists.* Their commiſſion and work was much the ſame with that of the apoſtles, to plant churches, and water the churches that were planted; and accordingly they were itinerants, as we find Timothy was. Timothy was firſt converted by Paul, and therefore he calls him his *own son in the faith.* We read of his converſion, Acts xvi. 23.

The ſcope of theſe two Epiſtles is, to direct Timothy how to diſcharge his office as an evangeliſt at Epheſus, where he now was, and where Paul ordered him for ſome time to reſide, to perfect the good work which he had begun there.

CHAP. I.

Ver. 1—4. It has been obſerved, that as in all the epiſtles to the churches, the apoſtolical benediction is *grace and peace*; in theſe two epiſtles to Timothy, and that of Titus, it is *grace, mercy, and peace*: as if miniſters had more need of God's mercy than other men. Miniſters need more grace than others to diſcharge their duty faithfully, and they need more mercy than others to pardon what is amiſs in them; and, if Timothy, ſo eminent a miniſter, muſt be indebted to the mercy of God, and needed the increaſe and continuance of it, how much more do we miniſters in theſe times, who have ſo little of his excellent ſpirit?

Ver. 12—17. Obſerve, 1. Chriſt Jeſus is come into the world; the prophecies concerning his coming are now fulfilled.

2. He came to ſave ſinners, he came to ſave thoſe who could not ſave and help themſelves.

3. Blaſphemers and perſecutors are the chief of ſinners, ſo St. Paul reckoned them.

4. The chief of ſinners may become the chief of ſaints; ſo this apoſtle was, for he was not a whit behind the very chiefeſt apoſtles, 2. Cor. xi. 5. for Chriſt came to ſave the chief of ſinners.

5. This is a very great truth, it is a faithful ſaying, theſe are true and faithful words, which may be depended on.

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6. It deſerves to be received, to be believed by all of us for our comfort and encouragement.

The mercy which Paul found with God, notwithſtanding his great wickedneſs before his converſion, he ſpeaks of, for the encouragement of others to repent and believe.

Note here, 1. Our apoſtle was one of the firſt great ſinners converted to Chriſtianity.

2. He was converted and obtained mercy for the ſake of others as well as of himſelf: he was a pattern to others.

3. The Lord Jeſus Chriſt ſhews great long-ſuffering in the converſion of great ſinners.

4. Thoſe who obtain mercy believe on the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, for without faith it is impoſſible to pleaſe God, Heb. xi. 6.

5. Thoſe who believe on Chriſt, *believe on him to life everlasting*: they believe to the ſaving of the ſoul, Heb. x. 39.

CHAP. II.

Ver. 1—8. Obſerve, 1. Chriſtians are to be men much given to prayer; they ought to abound herein.

2. In our prayers we ought to have a generous concern for others as well as for ourſelves. We are to pray for all men, and to give thanks for all men;

and muſt not confine our prayers or thankſgivings to our own perſons or families.

3. Prayer conſiſts of various parts; of ſupplications, interceſſions, and thankſgivings; for we muſt pray for the mercies we want, as well as be thankful for mercies already received; and we are to deprecate the judgments our own or others' ſins have deſerved.

4. All men, yea kings themſelves, and thoſe that are in authority, are to be prayed for. They want our prayers, for they have many difficulties to encounter, many ſnares to which their exalted ſtations expoſe them.

5. In praying for our governors, we take the moſt likely courſe to lead a peaceable and quiet life.

6. If we would lead a peaceable and quiet life, we muſt live in all godlineſs and honeſty; we muſt do our duty to God and man.

CHAP. III.

Ver. 1—7. Obſerve, 1. The office of a ſcripture biſhop is an office of divine appointment, and not of human invention. The miniſtry is not a creature of the ſtate; and it is pity that the miniſter ſhould be at any time the tool of the ſtate.

2. This office of a chriſtian biſhop is a work which requires diligence and application. The apoſtle repreſents it under the notion and character of a work,

not of great honour and advantage; for miniſters ſhould always look more to their work, than to the honour and advantage of their office.

3. It is a good work, a work of the greateſt importance, and deſigned for the greateſt good. The miniſtry is converſant about no lower concerns than the life and happineſs of immortal ſouls. It is a good work, becauſe deſigned to illuſtrate the divine perfections in bringing many ſons into glory.

4. There ought to be an earneſt deſire of the office in thoſe who would be put into it. If a man deſires, he ſhould earneſtly deſire it; for the proſpect he hath of bringing greater glory to God, and of doing the greateſt good to the ſouls of men by this means.

CHAP. IV.

Ver. 6—16. Obſerve, That there is a great deal to be got by godlineſs. It will be of uſe to us in the conduct of our whole converſation; *for it hath the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.* The gain of godlineſs lies much in the *promise:* and the promiſes made to godly people relate to the *life that now is;* but eſpecially they relate to the *life which is to come.* Under the Old Teſtament the promiſes were moſtly of temporal bleſſings, but under the New Teſtament of ſpiritual and eternal bleſſings.

If godly people have but little of the good things

of *the life that now is*, yet it ſhall be made up to them in the good things of *the life that is to come*.

Obſerve, 1. Miniſters are engaged in ſaving work, which makes it a good work.

2. The care of miniſters ſhould be, in the firſt place, to ſave themſelves; ſave thyſelf in the firſt place, ſo ſhalt thou be inſtrumental to ſave them that hear thee.

3. Miniſters in their preaching ſhould aim at the ſalvation of thoſe that hear them, next to the ſalvation of their own ſouls.

4. The beſt way to anſwer both theſe ends, is to take heed to ourſelves.

CHAP. V.

Ver. 3—16. Obſerve, That it is the duty and comfort of thoſe that are deſolate to truſt in God. Therefore God ſometimes brings his people into ſuch ſtraights that they have nothing elſe to truſt to, that they may with more confidence truſt in him. Widowhood is a deſolate eſtate, but *let the widows trust in me*, Jer. xlix. 11. and rejoice that they have a God to truſt to.

The reſpect of children to their parents, and their care of them, is fitly called piety. This is requiting their parents. Children can never ſufficiently requite their parents for the care they have taken of them, and the pains they have taken with them; yet however, they muſt endeavour to do it. It is the in-

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dispensable duty of children, if their parents be in necessity, and they are in ability to relieve them, to do it to the utmost of their power, *for that is good and acceptable before God.*

Charity misplaced, is a great hindrance to true charity; therefore there should be prudence in the choice of the objects of charity, that it may not be thrown away upon those that are not properly so, that there may be the more for those that are real objects of charity.

Particular care ought to be taken to relieve those when they fall into decay, who, when they had wherewithal, were ready to every good work.

Those that would find mercy when they are in distress, must shew mercy when they are in prosperity.

It is seldom that those who are idle are *only* idle; they learn *to be tattlers and busy-bodies*, and to make mischief among neighbours, and sow discord among brethren.

CHAP. XIV.

Ver. 1—5. If the professors of religion misbehave themselves, *the name of God and his doctrine* is in danger of being *blasphemed*, by those who seek occasions *to speak evil of the worthy name by which we are called.* And this is a good reason why we should carry ourselves well, that we might prevent the occasion, which many seek, and will be glad to lay hold of, to speak ill of religion for our sakes.

Ver. 6—12. Here we have,

1. A chriſtian's gain; it is godlineſs with contentment. This is the true way to gain, yea it is gain itſelf.

2. A chriſtian's gain is great; it is not like the little gain of worldlings, who are ſo fond of a little worldly advantage.

3. Godlineſs is ever accompanied with contentment, in a greater or leſſer degree.

If God give us the neceſſary ſupports of life, we ought to be content therewith, though we have not the ornaments and delights of it.

1. Obſerve, What is the root of all evil; the love of money. People may have money, and yet not love it; but if they love it inordinately, it will puſh them on to all evil.

2. Covetous perſons will quit the faith, if that be the way to get money; *which, while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith.*

Thoſe that err from the faith pierce themſelves with many ſorrows: they that depart from God do but treaſure up ſorrows for themſelves.

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II. TIMOTHY.

THIS ſecond Epiſtle Paul wrote to Timothy from Rome, when he was a priſoner there and in danger of his life. It appears that his removal out of this world, in his own apprehenſion, was not far off, eſpecially conſidering the rage and malice of his perſecutors; and that he had been brought before the emperor Nero, which he calls *his first answer when no man stood with him*, but all men forſook him, chap. iv. 16. And interpreters agree that this was the laſt Epiſtle he wrote.

Where Timothy now was is not certain. The ſcope of this Epiſtle ſomewhat differs from that of the former; not ſo much relating to his office as an evangeliſt, as to his perſonal conduct and behaviour.

CHAP. I.

Ver. 6.—14. Obſerve, 1. We are likely to bear afflictions well, when we fetch ſtrength and power from God to enable us to bear them.

2. All chriſtians, but eſpecially miniſters, muſt expect afflictions and perſecutions for the ſake of the goſpel.

3. Theſe ſhall be proportioned, according to the power of God (1. Cor. x. 13.) reſting upon us.

Death now, of an enemy, is become a friend, and

is the gate by which we pafs out of a troublefome, vexatious, finful world, into a world of perfect peace and purity; and the power thereof is broken, for death doth not triumph over thofe who believe the gofpel, but they triumph over it. O death, where is thy fting? O grave, where is thy victory? 1 Cor. xv. 55.

CHAP. II.

Ver. 19—21. Obferve, 1. Whatever errors are introduced into the church, the foundation of God ftandeth fure, his purpofe can never be defeated.

2. God hath fome in the church, which are his, and which he knows to be his.

3. Profeffing chriftians name the name of Chrift, are called by his name, and therefore are bound to depart from iniquity, for Chrift gave himfelf for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, Tit. ii. 14.

Ver. 22—26. Obferve, 1. Youthful lufts are very dangerous, for which reafon even hopeful young people fhould be warned of them, for they war againft the foul, 1 Pet. ii. 11.

The more we follow that which is good, the fafter and the further we fhall flee from that which is evil. Righteoufnefs, and faith, and love, will be excellent antidotes againft youthful lufts.

CHAP. III.

Ver. 1—5. Note, 1. Sin makes the times perilous. When there is a general corruption of manners, and of the tempers of men, that makes the times dangerous to live in, for it is hard to keep our integrity in the midft of general corruption.

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2. The coming of perilous times is an evidence of the truth of ſcripture predictions. If the event in this reſpect did not anſwer the prophecy, we might be tempted to queſtion the divinity of the bible.

3. We are all concerned to know this, to believe and conſider it, that we may not be ſurpriſed when we ſee the times perilous; *this know also.*

Obſerve, 1. Men may be very bad and wicked, under a profeſſion of religion. They may be lovers of themſelves, and yet have a form of godlineſs.

2. A form of godlineſs is a very different thing from the power of it, men may have the one, and be wholly deſtitute of the other; yea, they deny it, at leaſt practically in their lives.

From ſuch, good chriſtians muſt withdraw themſelves.

Ver. 10—13. Thoſe miniſters are likely to do good, and leave laſting fruits of their labours, whoſe manner of life agrees with their doctrine; as, on the contrary, thoſe cannot expect to profit the people at all, who preach well and live ill.

Obſerve, Thoſe who would acquaint themſelves with the things of God, and be aſſured of them, muſt know the holy ſcriptures, for thoſe are the ſummary of divine revelation. It is a great happineſs to know the holy ſcriptures from our childhood: and children ſhould betimes get the knowledge of the ſcriptures.

Obſerve further, The Scriptures we are to know are the Holy Scriptures. They came from the holy God, and were delivered by holy men, and contain holy precepts, and treat of holy things, and were de-

ſigned to make us holy, and lead us in the way of holineſs to happineſs.

Thoſe are wiſe indeed, who are wiſe to ſalvation, The ſcriptures will make us wiſe to ſalvation, if they be mixed with faith, but not otherwiſe, Heb. iv. 2. For if we do not believe their truth and goodneſs, they will do us no good.

CHAP. IV.

Ver. 1—8. The courage and comfort of dying ſaints and miniſters, and eſpecially dying martyrs, is a great confirmation of the truth of the chriſtian religion, and a great encouragement to living ſaints and miniſters in their work.

Obſerve, With what pleaſure Paul ſpeaks of dying, he calls it his *departure*. Though it is probable he foreſaw he muſt die a violent, bloody death, yet he calls it his departure, or his releaſe.

Note, 1. The life of a chriſtian, but eſpecially of a miniſter, is a warfare and a race, and compared to each in ſcripture.

2. It is a good warfare, the cauſe is good, and the victory ſure, if we continue faithful and courageous.

3. We muſt fight this good fight; we muſt fight it out and finiſh our courſe.

4. It is a great comfort to a dying ſaint, when he can look back upon his paſt life and ſay with our apoſtle, *I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course.*

Let it then be our conſtant endeavour, by the grace of God, to finiſh our courſe with joy, Acts xx. 24.

TITUS.

THIS Epiſtle of Paul to Titus is much of the ſame nature with thoſe of Timothy. Both were converts of Paul, and his companions in labours and ſufferings; both in the office of evangeliſts, whoſe work was to water the churches planted by the apoſtles, and to ſet in order the things that were wanting in them. We read much of this Titus, his titles and characters, and active uſefulneſs in many places. He was a Greek, Gal. ii. 3. He was with the apoſtle at Rome, and thence went into Dalmatia, 2 Tim. iv. 10. after which no more occurs of him in the ſcriptures.

CHAP. I.

Ver. 6—9. Obſerve, The word of God, revealed in the ſcripture, is a true and infallible word; the word of him that *is the amen, the true and faithful witness*, and whoſe ſpirit guided the penmen of it.

Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

2. Miniſters muſt hold faſt, and hold forth the faithful word in their teaching and life. *I have kept the faith,* was Paul's comfort, 2. Tim. iv. 7. *and not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God;* there was his faithfulneſs, Acts xxii. 27.

Ver. 12—14. When Paul wrote to Timothy he bade him *instruct with meekness;* but now when he writes to Titus, he bids him *rebuke them sharply.* There muſt in reproving be a diſtinguiſhing of *sins* and *sins.* Some are more groſs and heinous in their nature, or in the manner of their commiſſion, with openneſs and boldneſs, to the greater diſhonour of God, and danger and hurt to men: and between *sinners* and *sinners.* Some are of a more tender and tractable temper, apter to be wrought on by gentleneſs, and to be ſunk and diſcouraged by too much roughneſs and ſeverity; others more hardy and ſtubborn, and needing more cutting language to beget remorſe and ſhame. Wiſdom therefore is requiſite to temper and manage reproofs aright, as may be moſt likely to do good.

CHAP. II.

Ver. 11—14. The goſpel firſt unteaches that which is evil; to abandon ſin, *ungodliness, and worldly lusts;* and then to make conſcience of that which is good; *to live soberly, righteously, and*

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godly in this present evil world. Religion is not made up of negatives only, there muſt be doing good as well as eſchuing evil; in theſe conjunctly is ſincerity proved, and the goſpel adorned. We ſhould live *soberly* with repect to ourſelves, in the due government of our appetites and paſſions, keeping the limits of moderation and temperance, avoiding all inordiate exceſſes: *righteously* towards all men; rendering to all their due, and injuring none; but rather doing good to others according to our ability and their need: and *godly*, towards God in the duties of his worſhip and ſervice.

Obſerve, Redemption from ſin and ſanctification of the nature go together, and both make a peculiar people unto God.

The goſpel is not a doctrine of licentiouſneſs, but of holineſs and good life. We are redeemed from our vain converſation, to ſerve God *in holiness and righteousness all the days of our life.*

Ver. 15. The moſt effectual way for miniſters to ſecure themſelves from contempt, is to keep cloſe to the doctrine of Chriſt, and imitate his example; to preach and live well, and do their duty with prudence and courage: this will beſt preſerve both their reputation and comfort.

CHAP. III.

Ver. 8. Obſerve, 1. When the apoſtle had opened the grace of God towards us, and repreſented

our juſtification as ſolely by that grace, he immediately preſſeth the neceſſity of good works, *This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly;* i.e. this is a true chriſtian doctrine of high importance, and which miniſters muſt moſt earneſtly preſs and inculcate; *that they which have believed in God* do not think that a bare naked faith will ſave them; but it muſt be an operative, working faith, bringing forth the fruit of righteouſneſs; they muſt make it their care *to maintain good works;* not to do it occaſionally only, and when opportunities come in their way, but to ſeek opportunities for doing them. *These things are good and profitable unto men.* Theſe things are good in themſelves, and the teaching of them uſeful to mankind, making perſons a common good in their places.

Obſerve, 2. Miniſters in teaching muſt ſee that they deliver what is ſound and good in itſelf, and profitable to them that hear. All muſt be to the uſe of edifying both of perſons and ſocieties.

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PHILEMON.

THIS Epiſtle to Philemon is placed the laſt of thoſe with the name of Paul to them, perhaps becauſe the ſhorteſt, and of an argument peculiar and different from all the others; yet ſuch as the Spirit of God which indited it, ſaw would, in its kind, be very inſtructive and uſeful in the churches. The occaſion of it was thus: Philemon, one of note, and probably a miniſter in the church of Coloſſe, a city of Phrygia, had a ſervant named Oneſimus, who having purloined his goods, ran away from him, and in his rambles came to Rome, where Paul was then a priſoner for the goſpel; and providentially coming under his preaching there, was by the bleſſing of God converted by him; after which he miniſtered awhile to the apoſtle in bonds, and might have been further uſeful to him; but underſtanding him to be another man's ſervant, he would not, without his conſent, detain him, but ſends him back with this letter commendatory, wherein he earneſtly ſues for his pardon and kind reception.

Ver. 8. Obſerve, A diſpoſition to do good, and paſt inſtances and expreſſions of it, is a good handle to take hold on for preſſing unto more.

Ver. 10. *I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds.* So does God ſometimes honour and comfort his ſuffering ſervants, not only working good in themſelves by their ſufferings, exerciſing and improving thereby their own graces, but making them a means of much ſpiritual good to others; either to their converſion as of Oneſimus here, or of their confirmation and ſtrengthening, as Phil. i. 14. *Many brethren waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word of the Lord without fear.*

Ver. 20. Obſerve, 1. Chriſtians ſhould do the things that may joy the hearts of one another, both people and miniſters reciprocally; and miniſters of their brethren. From the world they expect trouble, and where may they look for comfort and joy but in one another?

2. Fruits of faith and obedience in people are the miniſter's greateſt joy, eſpecially the more of love appears in them to Chriſt and his members, forgiving injuries, ſhewing compaſſion, being merciful as their heavenly Father is merciful.

Ver. 21. Obſerve, 1. Our dependence is on God for life and liberty, and opportunity of ſervice: all is by divine pleaſure.

2. When abridged of theſe or any other mercies, our truſt and hope muſt be in God, without fainting

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3. Truſt muſt be with the uſe of means, prayer eſpecially, though no other ſhould be at hand, this hath unlocked heaven and opened priſon doors.

4. Prayer of people for miniſters, eſpecially when they are in diſtreſs and danger, is their great duty. Miniſters need and requeſt it. Yet

5. Though prayer obtain, yet it does not merit the things obtained. They are God's gift and Chriſt's purchaſe.

6. In praying for faithful miniſters, people in effect pray for themſelves. *I trust I shall be given unto you*, i. e. for your ſervice and comfort, and edification in Chriſt. See 2 Cor. iv. 5.

7. The humility of the apoſtle. His liberty, ſhould he have it, he would own to be through their prayers, as well as, or more than, his own.

HEBREWS.

CONCERNING this Epiſtle we muſt inquire, 1. *Into the divine authority of it;* for this has been queſtioned by ſome, whoſe diſtempered eyes could not bear the light of it, or whoſe errors have been confuted by it. Such as the Arians, who deny the *Godhead* and *Self-exiſtence of Chriſt;* and the Socinians, who deny his *Satisfaction.* But after all the attempts of ſuch men to diſparage this Epiſtle, the divine original of it ſhines forth with thoſe ſtrong and unclouded rays, that he who runs may read it as an eminent part of the canon of ſcripture.

2. As to the *divine amanuenſis*, or penman of this Epiſtle, it is generally aſſigned to the apoſtle Paul: and though it has been objected, that ſince Paul put his name to all his other Epiſtles, he would not have omitted it here; yet others have well anſwered, that he being *the apoſtle of the Gentiles,* who were odious to the Jews, might think fit to conceal his name, leſt their prejudices againſt him might hinder them from reading and weighing it as they ought to do.

3. As to the *scope and design* of this Epiſtle, it is very evident it was clearly to inform the minds, and ſtrongly to confirm the judgments of the Hebrews in the tranſcendent excellency of the *gospel* over the *law*; and ſo to take them off from the ceremonies of the law, to which they were wedded, and of which they were ſo fond, that they even doted on them. And as thoſe of them who were chriſtians retained too much of the *old leaven*, the deſign of this Epiſtle was to preſs and perſuade them to a conſtant adherence to the chriſtian faith, and perſeverance in it, notwithſtanding all the ſufferings they might meet with in ſo doing.

CHAP. I.

Ver. 1—3. The times of the goſpel are the *last times*. The goſpel revelation is the *last* we are to expect from God. There was the *first*, the *natural revelation*; then the *patriarchal*, *by dreams, visions and voices*; then the *Mosaical*, in the law given forth and written down; then the *prophetical*, in explaining the law and giving further diſcoveries of Chriſt; but now we muſt expect no new revelation, but only more of the Spirit of Chriſt to help us better to underſtand what is already revealed.

Ver. 10—12. *Christ is the same in himself*, the ſame yeſterday, and to-day, and for ever: and *the same to his people*, in all the changes of time. And this may well ſupport all who have an intereſt in

Chriſt under all the changes they meet with in the world, and under all they meet with in themſelves.

Ver. 13—14. Obſerve, 1. The deſcription given of the ſaints, *they are the heirs of ſalvation*; at preſent they are under age, heirs, not inheritors.

2. The dignity and privilege of the ſaints. The angels are ſent forth to *minister* for them. They miniſter for them in oppoſing the malice and power of evil ſpirits, in protecting and keeping their bodies, pitching their tents about theirs, inſtructing, quickening, and comforting their ſouls under Chriſt and the Holy Ghoſt; and thus they *shall do* in gathering all the ſaints together at the laſt day.

CHAP. II.

Ver. 1—5. It is a great ſalvation which the goſpel diſcovers, for it diſcovers *a great* Saviour. It ſhews how we may be ſaved from *so great sin* and *so great misery*, and be reſtored to *so great holiness*, and *so great happiness*.

Ver. 10—13. Obſerve, 1. Chriſt and believers are brethren; brethren in what is *heavenly* as well as what is *earthly*.

2. Chriſt is not aſhamed to own his relations.

Ver. 14—18. Obſerve, 1. Chriſt's paſſion. He ſuffered being tempted; and his temptations were not the leaſt part of his ſufferings.

2. Chriſt's compaſſion: he is able to ſuccour them that are tempted. He is touched with a feeling of

our infirmities, a ſympathiſing phyſician, tender and skilful: he knows how to deal with tempted, ſorrowful ſouls, becauſe he has been ſick of the ſame diſeaſe—not of ſin, but of temptation and trouble of ſoul.

Here obſerve, 1. The beſt of chriſtians are ſubject to temptations while in this world.

Temptations bring our ſouls into ſuch diſtreſs and danger as to need ſupport and ſuccour.

3. That Chriſt is ready and willing to ſuccour thoſe who under their tempations apply themſelves to him; and that he became man and was tempted, that he might be every way qualified to ſuccour his people.

CHAP III.

Ver. 7—19. Obſerve, 1. That an heart of unbelief is an evil heart.

2. That an evil heart of unbelief is at the bottom of all our ſinful departures from God.

3. That chriſtian brethren have need to be cautioned againſt apoſtacy.

Note, 1. There is a great deal of deceitfulneſs in ſin. It appears fair, but is filthy; it appears pleaſant, but is pernicious; it promiſes much, but performs nothing.

2. The deceitfulneſs of ſin is of a hardening nature to the ſoul. One ſin allowed prepares for another: every act of ſin confirms the habit.

Perſeverance in faith is the beſt evidence of the ſincerity of our faith.

CHAP. IV.

Ver. 1—10. Obſerve, 1, The word is preached to us that we may profit by it.

2. There have been in all ages a great many unprofitable hearers.

3. That which is at the bottom of all our unprofitableneſs under the word is unbelief.

Ver. 11—16. Obſerve, 1. There is a throne of grace ſet up. A throne ſpeaks authority, and awe, and reverence: a throne of grace ſpeaks great encouragement, even to the chief of ſinners.

2. It is our duty and intereſt to be often found before this throne of grace.

2. Our buſineſs and errand at the throne of grace ſhould be, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. We want mercy to pardon all our ſins, and grace to purify our ſouls.

4. There are ſeaſons in which we ſhall moſt ſenſibly need the mercy and grace of God, times of temptation, and eſpecially a dying time.

5. In all our approaches to this throne of grace and mercy, we ſhould come with an humble freedom and boldneſs.

6. That the office of Chriſt, as being our high prieſt, and ſuch an high prieſt, ſhould be the ground of our confidence in all our approaches to the throne of grace.

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CHAP. V.

Ver. 1—9. Our good deeds muſt be preſented by Chriſt to render ourſelves and them acceptable; and our ill deeds muſt be expiated by the ſacrifice of himſelf, that he may not condemn and deſtroy us.

Ver. 10—14. Note, 1. That in the oracles of God there are ſome firſt principles, plain to be underſtood, and neceſſary to be learned.

2. That there are alſo deep and ſublime myſteries, which thoſe ſhould ſearch into who have learned the firſt principles, that ſo they may ſtand complete in the whole will of God.

3. That ſome perſons, inſtead of going forward in chriſtian knowledge, forget the very firſt principles they had learned long ago; and indeed they who are not *improving* under the means of grace, will be loſing.

4. It is a ſin and a ſhame for perſons who are men for their age and ſtanding in the church, to be children and babes in underſtanding.

CHAP. VI.

Ver. 9—20. Obſerve, 1. There are things which accompany ſalvation; things which are never ſeparated from ſalvation; things which ſhew the perſon to be in a ſtate of ſalvation, and will iſſue in eternal ſalvation.

2. The things which accompany ſalvation, are better things than ever any hypocrite or apoſtate enjoyed. They are better in their nature and in their iſſue.

3. That it is our duty to hope well of thoſe in whom nothing appears to the contrary.

4. Miniſters muſt ſometimes ſpeak by way of caution to thoſe of whoſe ſalvation they have good hopes: and thoſe who have in themſelves good hopes, as to their eternal ſalvation, ſhould yet conſider ſeriouſly how fatal a diſappointment it would be if they ſhould fall ſhort.

Obſerve, 1. God is concerned for the conſolation of believers, as well as for their ſanctification.

2. The conſolations of God are ſtrong enough to ſupport his people under their ſtrongeſt trials.

As an unſeen glory within the vail, is what the believer is hoping for; ſo an unſeen Jeſus within the vail is the great foundation of his hope.

CHAP. VII.

Ver. 1—3. The moſt received opinion reſpecting Melchiſedek is, that he was a Canaanite king, who reigned in Salem, and kept up religion and the worſhip of the true God; that he was raiſed to be a type of Chriſt, and was honoured by Abraham as ſuch. It is ſaid of him, *He was without father, without mother, without deſcent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life.* This muſt not be underſtood according to the letter, but the ſcrip-

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ture has chosen to set him forth as an extraordinary person, without giving us his genealogy, that he might be a fitter type of Christ, who as man was without father, as God without mother; whose priesthood is without descent, did not descend to him from another, nor from him to another, but is personal and perpetual.

Ver. 11—28. The High Priest of our profession holds his office by that innate power of endless life, which he has in himself, not only to preserve himself alive, but to communicate spiritual and eternal life to all those who duly rely upon his sacrifice and intercession. This is the safety and happiness of believers, that their everlasting High Priest is able to save to the uttermost, in all times, in all cases, in every juncture, all who come to God by him. *Christ is such an High Priest as became us, holy, harmless, and undefiled*, &c. Observe,

1. Our case as sinners needed an high-priest to make satisfaction and intercession for us.

2. No priest could be suitable or sufficient for our reconciliation to God, but one who was perfectly righteous in his own person.

3. That the Lord Jesus was exactly such an high-priest as we wanted, for he has a personal holiness absolutely perfect.

CHAP. VIII.

Ver. 1—2. In the tabernacle, which was pitched by man, according to the appointment of God, there

was an outer part, in which was the altar where they were to offer their ſacrifices, and this typified Chriſt dying; and there was an interior part within the vail which typified Chriſt interceding for the people in heaven.

Ver. 3—5. It neceſſarily belongs to the prieſthood of Chriſt, that he ſhould have ſomewhat to offer; and he, as the antitype, had himſelf to offer, his human nature upon the altar of his divine nature, as the great atoning ſacrifice that finiſhed tranſgreſſion, and made an end of ſin, once for all; and he hath the incenſe of his own righteouſneſs and merits too to offer with all that his people offer up to God by him, to render them acceptable. We muſt not dare to approach God, or preſent any thing to him, but in and through Chriſt, depending upon his merits and mediation; for if we are accepted, it is in the beloved. Something there muſt be in Chriſt's prieſthood that anſwers to the high-prieſt's entering within the vail to make interceſſion, without which he could not have been a perfect prieſt; and what is that but the aſcenſion of Chriſt into heaven, and his appearance there in the ſight of God for his people, to preſent their prayers, and plead their cauſe? So that if he had ſtill continued on earth he could not have been a perfect prieſt; and an imperfect one he could not be.

Ver. 6—13. Obſerve, reſpecting the pardon of ſin,

1. The freeneſs of it. It does not reſult from merit in man, but from mercy in God.

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2. The fulneſs of this pardon. It extends to their unrighteous ſins and iniquities; to all kinds of ſin.

3. The fixedneſs of this pardon. It is ſo final and ſo fixed, that God will remember their ſins no more.

CHAP. IX.

Ver. 1—5. In the inner part of the ſanctuary there were,

1. The golden cenſer, which was to hold the incenſe, and the golden altar ſet up to burn the incenſe upon. Both the one and the other were typical of Chriſt, of the pleaſing and prevailing interceſſion which he makes in heaven, grounded upon the merits and ſatisfaction of his ſacrifice, upon which we are to depend for acceptance and the bleſſing from God.

2. The ark of the covenant overlaid round about with pure gold. This typified Chriſt and his perfect obedience to the law, and fulfilling all righteouſneſs for us.

Over the ark were the cherubim of glory ſhadowing the mercy-ſeat.

1. The mercy-ſeat, which was the covering of the ark. It was called the propitiatory, and it was of pure gold, as long and as broad as the ark in which the tables of the law were laid. It was an eminent type of Chriſt, and of his perfect righteouſneſs, ever adequate to the dimenſions of the law of God, and covering all our tranſgreſſions, interpoſing between

the Shechinah or ſymbol of God's preſence, and our ſinful failures, and covering them.

2. The cherubim of glory ſhadowing the mercy-ſeat; repreſenting the holy angels of God, who take pleaſure in looking into the great work of our redemption by Chriſt, and are ready to perform every good office under the Redeemer, for thoſe that are the heirs of ſalvation.

Ver. 6—7. Into the ſecond, the interior part of the tabernacle went the high prieſt alone. This part was an emblem of heaven and Chriſt's aſcenſion thither.

Obſerve, 1. None but the high prieſt muſt go into the holieſt; ſo none but Chriſt could enter into heaven in his own name, and by his own right, and by his own merits.

2. In entering into the holieſt, the high-prieſt must firſt go through the outer ſanctuary, and through the vail; ſignifying that Chriſt went to heaven through a holy life and a violent death: the vail of his flesh was rent aſunder.

3. That the high prieſt entered but once a year into the holieſt, and in this (as in every thing else) the antitype exeels the type: for he is entered once for all, during the whole diſpenſation of the goſpel.

4. The high prieſt muſt not enter without blood; ſignifying that Chriſt having undertook to be our high-prieſt, he could not have been admitted into heaven without ſhedding his blood for us; and that none of us can enter either into God's gracious pre-

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ſence here, or his glorious preſence hereafter, but by the blood of Jeſus.

5. That the high-prieſt under the law entering into the holieſt, offered up that blood for himſelf, his own errors firſt, and then for the errors of the people. This teaches us that Chriſt is a more excellent perſon and high prieſt than any under the law, for he has no errors of his own to offer for.

6. That when the legal high-prieſt had offered for himſelf, he muſt not ſtop there, but muſt alſo offer for the errors of the people. Our high-prieſt, though he needs not to offer for himſelf, yet he forgets not to offer for his people.

CHAP. X.

Ver. 19—39. Chriſtians ought to have a tender conſideration and concern for one another. They ſhould affectionately conſider, what their ſeveral wants, and weakneſſes, and temptations are; and they ſhould do this not to reproach one another, not to provoke one another to anger, but to love and good works, calling upon ourſelves and one another to love God and Chriſt more; to love duty and holineſs more; to love our brethren in Chriſt more; and to do all the good offices of chriſtian affection both to the bodies and ſouls of each other.

The apoſtle, in deſcribing the ſin of apoſtacy, repreſents it as *ſinning wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth.* This text has been the

occaſion of great diſtreſs to ſome gracious ſouls: they have been ready to concſude that every wilful ſin after conviction, and againſt knowledge, is the unpardonable ſin: but this has been their infirmity and error. The ſin here mentioned is a total and final apoſtacy, when men with a full and fixed will and reſolution deſpiſe and reject Chriſt the only Saviour, deſpiſe and reſiſt the Spirit, the only ſanctifier; and deſpiſe and renounce the goſpel, the only way of ſalvation; and all this after they have known, owned, and profeſſed the chriſtian religion, and continue to do ſo obſtinately and maliciouſly:

Obſerve, 1. The happineſs of the ſaints in heaven is ſubſtance, ſomething of real weight and worth. All things here are but ſhadow.

2. It is a better ſubſtance than any thing they can have or loſe here.

3. It is an enduring ſubſtance. It will outlive time and run parallel with eternity.

4. This will make a rich amends for all they can loſe and ſuffer here.

5. That chriſtians ſhould know this in themſelves, for the aſſured knowledge of this will help them to endure any ſight of afflictions they may have to encounter with in this world.

CHAP. XI.

Ver. 4—19. *Abraham looked for a city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.*

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Obſerve, 1. Heaven is a city, a regular ſociety, well eſtabliſhed, well defended, and well ſupplied.

2. The due regard which Abraham had to this heavenly city.

3. The influence this had upon his preſent converſation.

Heaven is repreſented as *a better country*.

Obſerve, 1. The heavenly country is better than any upon earth.

2. All true believers deſire this better country.

Ver. 20—31. Jacob's faith operated particularly *when he was a dying*. Obſerve, Though the grace of faith is of univerſal uſe throughout our whole lives, yet it is eſpecially ſo when we come to die.

Moses chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt.

Obſerve, 1. The pleaſures of ſin are, and will be, but ſhort.

2. That the pleaſures of this world, and eſpecially thoſe of a court, are too often the pleaſures of ſin.

3. Suffering is to be choſen rather than ſin; there being more evil in the leaſt ſin than there can be in the greateſt ſuffering.

4. It greatly alleviates the evil of ſuffering, when we ſuffer with the people of God, embarked in the ſame intereſt, and animated by the ſame Spirit.

See how Moſes weighed matters; in one ſcale he put the worſt of religion, *the reproach of Chrsit*,

in the other ſcale the beſt of the world, *the treasures of Egypt;* and in his judgment, directed by faith, the worſt of religion weighed down the beſt of the world.

CHAP. XII.

Ver. 4—17. God has directed his people how they ought to behave themſelves under all their afflictions: they muſt avoid the extremes which many run into.

1. They muſt not deſpiſe the chaſtening of the Lord.

2. They muſt not faint when they are rebuked.

Obſerve, 1. It is the duty of Chriſtians, when in a ſuffering ſtate, to *follow peace with all men*, yea even with thoſe who may be inſtrumental in their ſufferings.

2. Peace and holineſs are connected together: there can be no right peace without holineſs. We muſt not, under pretence of living peaceably with all men, leave the way of holineſs, but cultivate peace in the way of holineſs.

3. *Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.* The viſion of God our Saviour in heaven is reſerved as the reward of holineſs, and the ſtreſs of our ſalvation is laid upon our holineſs.

Ver. 18—29. Chriſt is the Mediator of the new covenant. He is the middle perſon who goes between both parties, God and man, to bring them to

gether in this covenant, to keep them together, notwithſtanding the ſins of the people, and God's diſpleaſure againſt them for ſin; to offer up our prayers to God, and to bring down the favours of God to us; plead with God for us, and to plead with us for God; and at length to bring God and his people together in heaven, and to be a Mediator of fruition between them for ever; they beholding and enjoying God in Chriſt, and God beholding and bleſſing them in Chriſt.

This covenant is ratified by the blood of Chriſt ſprinkled upon our conſciences, as the blood of the ſacrifice was ſprinkled upon the altar and the ſacrifice. This blood of Chriſt is ſpeaking blood, and it ſpeaks better things than that of Abel.

1. It ſpeaks to God in behalf of ſinners. It pleads, not for vengeance, as the blood of Abel did on him that ſhed it, but for mercy.

2. To ſinners in the name of God it ſpeaks pardon to their ſins, peace to their ſouls; and beſpeaks their ſtricteſt obedience, and higheſt love and thankfulneſs.

CHAP. XIII.

Ver. 1—17. The duty and grace which is contrary to *covetousness* is being ſatisfied and pleaſed *with such things as we have.* We muſt *be content with our present lot*, we muſt bring our minds to our preſent condition, and this is the ſure way to

contentment; and they that cannot do it, would not *be contented* though God ſhould raiſe their condition to their minds, for the mind would riſe with the condition. Haman was the great court-favourite, and yet not contented; Ahab on the throne, and yet not contented; Adam in paradiſe, and yet not contented; yea the angels in heaven, and yet not contented: But Paul, though abaſed and empty, *had learned in every state, in any state, therewith to be content.*

Chriſtians have ſufficient reaſon to *be contented* with their preſent lot, for *God hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.* This was ſaid to Joſhua, chap. i. 5. but belongs to all the faithful ſervants of God. Old Teſtament promiſes may be applied to New Teſtament ſaints. This promiſe contains the ſum and ſubſtance of all the promiſes; *I will never, no, never leave thee, no, nor ever forsake thee.* Here are no leſs than five negatives heaped together to confirm the promiſe. The true believer ſhall have the gracious preſence of God with him in life, at death, and for ever.

JAMES.

THE writer of this Epiſtle was not James the ſon of Zebudee; for he was put to death by Herod, Acts xii. before chriſtianity had gained ſo much ground among the Jews of the diſperſion, as is here implied. But it was the other James, the ſon of Alpheus; who was couſin-german to Chriſt, and one of the twelve apoſtles, Mat. x. 3.

It is called a general Epiſtle, becauſe, as ſome think, not directed to any particular perſon or church, but ſuch an one as we call a circular letter. St. James, our author, was called the juſt, for his great piety. He was an eminent example of thoſe graces which he preſſes upon others.

The time when this Epiſtle was written is uncertain. The deſign of it is, to reprove chriſtians for their great degeneracy both in faith and manners; and to prevent the ſpreading of thoſe libertine doctrines which threatened the deſtruction of all practical godlineſs. It was alſo a ſpecial intention of the author of this Epiſtle, to awaken the Jewiſh nation to a ſenſe of the greatneſs and nearneſs of thoſe judgments which were coming upon them; and to ſupport all true chriſtians in the way of their duty, under thoſe calamities and perſecutions they might meet with.

CHAP. I.

Ver. 1—12. Let us take care, in times of trial, that *patience*, and not paſſion, be ſet to work in us.

We ſhould not pray ſo much for the removal of an affliction, as for wiſdom to make a right uſe of it.

Ver. 19—27. Obſerve, 1. That hearing is in order to doing. The moſt attentive and the moſt frequent hearing of *the word of God*, will not avail us, unleſs we be alſo *doers of it*.

2. That bare *hearers* are ſelf-deceivers. Their reaſoning is manifeſtly deceitful and falſe, when they would make one part of their work diſcharge them from the obligation they lie under to another.

When men are more concerned to *seem religious*, than really to be ſo, it is a ſign their *religion* is but *vain*.

Obſerve, 1. It is the glory of religion to be *pure and undefiled*, not mixed with inventions of men, nor the corruptions of the world.

2. That religion is pure and undefiled, which is ſo before God and the Father.

3. That compaſſion and charity to the poor and diſtreſſed, is a very great and neceſſary part of true religion: *visiting the fatherless and widow in their affliction*.

4. That an *unspotted life* muſt accompany an unfeigned love and charity; *to keep himself unspotted from the world*.

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CHAP. II.

Ver. 14—26. St. Paul, *in his epistles to the Romans and Galatians*, ſeems to aſſert the direct contrary thing to what St. James here lays down, ſaying it often, and with a great deal of emphaſis, *that we are justified by faith only, and not by the works of the law*. But notwithſtanding ſeeming differences, there is a very happy agreement between theſe inſpired writers.

The juſtification of which St. Paul ſpeaks, is different from that ſpoken of by St. James; the one ſpeaks of our *persons* being juſtified before God, the other ſpeaks of our *faith* being juſtified before men: and thus we ſee that our perſons are juſtified before God *by faith*, but our faith is juſtified before men by *works*. And this is ſo plainly the ſcope and deſign of the apoſtle James, that he is but confirming what St. Paul, in other places, ſays of his *faith*, that it is a *laborious faith*, and a faith *working by love*. Gal. v. 6.—1 Theſſ. i. 3.—Tit. iii. 8.

CHAP. III.

Ver. 13—18. Obſerve, That true wiſdom is God's gift; it comes from above: and it conſiſts of theſe ſeveral things,

1. It is pure, without mixture of maxims or aims that would debaſe it.

2. It is peaceable. Peace follows purity, and depends upon it.

3. It is gentle. Not ſtanding upon extreme right

in matters of property; nor ſaying or doing any thing rigorous in point of cenſure.

4. It is eaſy to be intreated. It is very perſuadable, either to what is good, or from what is evil.

5. It is full of mercy and good fruits, inwardly diſpoſed to every thing that is kind and good.

6. It is without partiality, making no undue ſurmiſes, or differences in our carriage toward one perſon more than another.

7. That wiſdom which is from above is without hypocriſy. It has no diſguiſes nor deceits.

CHAP. IV.

Ver. 1—10. If we ſeek any thing that we may ſerve God with it, we may expect he will either give what we ſeek for, or give us hearts to be content without it, and give opportunities of glorifying him ſome other way.

CHAP. V.

Ver. 1—11. The beſt way to bear afflictions is to look *to the end* of them; and *the pity* of God is ſuch, that he will not delay bringing them to an *end*, when his purpoſes are once anſwered; and the *tender mercy* of God is ſuch, that he will make his people an abundant amends for all their ſufferings and afflictions.

Ver. 12—20. Our condition in this world is various; and our wiſdom is to ſubmit to its being ſo, and to carry it as becomes us, both in proſperity and under affliction.

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I. PETER.

TWO Epiſtles we have inrolled in the ſacred canon of the Scripture, written by Peter, who was a moſt eminent apoſtle of Jeſus Chriſt, and whoſe character ſhines bright, as it is deſcribed in the four Goſpels, and in the Acts of the Apoſtles; but as it is painted by the Papiſts and legendary writers, it repreſents a perſon of extravagant pride and ambition.

The deſign of this firſt Epiſtle is,

1. To explain more fully the doctrines of chriſtianity to theſe newly converted Jews.

2. To direct and perſuade them to an holy converſation, in the faithful diſcharge of all perſonal and relative duties, whereby they would ſecure their own peace, and effectually confute the ſlanders and reproaches of their enemies.

3. To prepare them for ſufferings. This ſeems to be his principal intention; for he hath ſomething to this purpoſe in every chapter, and doth, by a great variety of arguments, encourage them to patience and perſeverance in the faith, leſt the perſecutions and ſad calamities that were coming upon them ſhould prevail with them to apoſtatiſe from Chriſt and the goſpel.

It is remarkable that you find not ſo much as one word ſavouring of the ſpirit and pride of a Pope in either of theſe Epiſtles.

CHAP. I.

Ver. 6. Note 1. Every ſound Chriſtian hath always ſomething *wherein* he may *greatly rejoice.*

2. The chief joy of a good chriſtian ariſeth from things ſpiritual and heavenly.

3. The beſt chriſtians, thoſe who have reaſon *greatly to rejoice,* may yet be *in great heaviness through manifold temptations.*

4. The afflictions and ſorrows of good people are but for a little while, they are *but for a season.*

5. Great heavineſs is often neceſſary to a chriſtian's good. *If need be ye are in heaviness.* Troubles, which lie heavy, never come upon us but when we have need, and never ſtay any longer than needs muſt.

Note, 1. That the afflictions of ſerious chriſtians are deſigned for *the trial of their faith.*

2. A tried *faith* is *much more precious than tried gold.* In both there is a purification, a ſeparation of the droſs, and a diſcovery of the ſoundneſs and goodneſs of the things: but gold does not increaſe and multiply by trial in the fire, it rather grows leſs; but *faith* is eſtabliſhed, improved, and multiplied, by the oppoſitions and afflictions that it meets with. *Gold* muſt periſh at laſt, but *faith* never will.

CHAP. II.

Learn, 1. Strong deſires and affections to the word of God, are a ſure evidence of a perſon's being born again.

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2. Growth and improvement in wiſdom and grace is the deſign and deſire of every chriſtian.

Ver. 7. Jeſus Chriſt i exceedi gly precious to all the faithful. The majeſty and grandeur of his perſon, the dignity of his office, his near relation, his wonderful works, his immenſe love; every thing engages the faithful to the higheſt eſteem and reſpect for Jeſus Chriſt.

Ver. 11. Learn, 1. The grand miſchief that ſin does to man, is this; *it wars against the soul.*

2. Of all ſorts of ſin, none is more injurious to the ſoul than *fleshly lusts.*

Ver. 17. The apoſtle concludes his diſcourſe concerning the duty of ſubjects with four admirable precepts.

1. *Honour all men.* A due reſpect is to be given to *all men.* The poor are not to be deſpiſed, Prov. xvii. 5. The wicked muſt be *honoured,* not for their wickedneſs, but for any other qualities, ſuch as wit, prudence, courage, eminency of employment, or the hoary head.

2. *Love the brotherhood.* All chriſtians are a fraternity, united to Chriſt the head, alike diſpoſed and qualified, nearly related in the ſame intereſt, having communion one with another, and going to the ſame home, and therefore ſhould love one another with a ſpecial affection.

3. *Fear God,* with the higheſt reverence, duty, and ſubmiſſion. If this be wanting, none of the other three duties can be performed as they ought.

4. *Honour the king,* with that higheſt honour

which is peculiarly due to him above other men.

Ver. 24. Learn 1, Jesus Christ bore the sins of all his people, and expiated them by his *death upon the cross.*

2. No man can depend safely upon Christ, as having borne his sin, and expiated his guilt, till he *dies unto sin and lives unto righteousness.*

CHAP III.

Ver. 3. Learn 1. Religious people should take care that all their external behaviour be answerable to their profession of christianity.

2. The *outward adorning* of the body is very often sensual and excessive; for instance, when it is immoderate, and above your degree and station in the world; when you are proud of it, and puffed up with it; when you dress designing to allure and tempt others; when your apparel is too rich, curious, or superfluous; when your fashions are fantastical, imitating the levity and vanity of the worst people; and when they are immodest and wanton.

Ver. 4. Learn 1. A true christian's chief care lies in the right ordering and commanding of his *spirit.* Where the hypocrite's work ends, there the true christian's work begins.

2. The endowments of *the inner man* are the chief *ornaments* of a christian.

Ver. 7. All married people should take care to behave themselves so lovingly and peaceably one to another, that they may not by their broils hinder the success of their prayers.

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CHAP. IV.

Ver. 12—13. Learn, 1. True christians do love and own the children of God in their lowest and most distressing circumstances.

2. Being forewarned of the persecutions of the world, christians should not be surprised at them.

3. Christians should not only be patient, but rejoice in the sharpest and sorest sufferings for Christ, because they are tokens of divine favour.

CHAP. V.

Ver. 2—3. Learn, 1. The eminent dignity of the church of God, and all its true members. These poor, dispersed, suffering christians were the flock of God. The rest of the world is a brutal herd.

2. The pastors of the church ought to consider their people, as the *flock of God*, as *God's heritage*, and treat them accordingly.

3. Ministers who are either driven to the work by necessity, or drawn to it by filthy lucre, cannot perform their duty, as they ought, because they do not do it willingly, *and with a ready mind*.

4. The best way a minister can take to engage the respect of a people, is to discharge his duty among them in the best manner he can, and to be a constant example to them of all that is good.

Ver. 7. The best remedy against immoderate care, is to *cast our care upon God*, and resign every event to his wise and gracious determination.

II. PETER.

THE penman of this Epiſtle appears plainly to be the ſame who wrote the foregoing; and the deſign of it is the ſame with that of the former, as is evident from the firſt verſe of the third chapter; whence obſerve, that in the things of God we have need of *precept upon precept, and line upon line*, and all little enough to keep it in remembrance; and yet theſe are the things which ſhould be moſt faithfully recorded, and frequently remembered by us.

CHAP. I.

Ver. 8—11. Obſerve, 1. It is the duty of believers to *make their election sure*, to clear it up to themſelves, that they are *the chosen of God*.

2. The way to *make sure* their eternal *election*, is to make out their effectual *calling*. None can look into the book of God's eternal counſels and decrees, but thoſe *whom God did predestinate—them he also called*; if we can find we are effectually called, we may conclude we are choſen to ſalvation.

3. It requires a great deal of diligence and labour *to make sure our calling and election*.

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CHAP. II.

Ver. 3—6. No political union or confederacy can keep off judgments from a ſinful people.

2. God can make uſe of contrary creatures to pupuniſh incorrigible ſinners. He deſtroys *the old world by water,* and Sodom by fire.

3. Moſt heinous ſins bring moſt grievous judgments.

4. The puniſhment of ſinners in former ages is deſigned for the example of thoſe who come after.

Ver. 7—9. Obſerve, 1. *The Lord knows them that are his.* He hath ſet apart him that is godly for himſelf; and if there is but one in five cities, he knows him.

2. The wiſdom of God is never at a loſs about ways and means to deliver his people.

3. The deliverance of the godly is the work of God.

4. God makes a very great difference in his dealings with the godly and the wicked. When he ſaves his people from deſtruction, he delivers over his enemies to deſerved ruin.

CHAP. III.

Ver. 11—18. That we may the better avoid being led away, the apoſtle directs us what to do. And,

1. We muſt *grow in grace.* He had before exhorted us to add one grace to another; and here he adds that of faith, and virtue, and knowledge.

2. *We must grow in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.* Labor to know him more clearly, fully, and to better purpoſe, ſo as to be more like him, and to love him better.

I. JOHN.

IT is evident that St. John the apoſtle was the author of this Epiſtle. It is called General, as being not inſcribed to any particular church. It is a circular letter ſent to divers churches in order to confirm them in their ſtedfaſt adherence to the Lord Chriſt, and the ſacred doctrine concerning his perſon and office againſt ſeducers; and to inſtigate them to adorn that doctrine by love to God and man, and particularly to each other, as being deſcended from God, united by the ſame head, and travelling towards the ſame eternal life.

CHAP. II.

Ver. 3—6. A diſobedient life is the confutation and ſhame of pretended religious knowledge.

Ver. 12—17. All chriſtians are not of the ſame ſtanding and ſtature. There are babes in Chriſt; there are grown men and old diſciples.

Ver. 18—19. Thoſe who apoſtatiſe from religion, ſufficiently indicate that before they were hypocrites in religion.

CHAP. III.

Ver. 1—3. The ſons of God know that their Lord is holy and pure. They then that hope to live with God muſt ſtudy the utmoſt purity from the world, and the fleſh, and ſin.

Ver. 4—10. Practical renunciation of ſin is the great evidence of ſpiritual union with, continuance in, and ſaving knowledge of the Lord Chriſt.

Ver. 11—18. Chriſtian love includes a peculiar love, to the chriſtian ſociety, to the catholic church, and that for the ſake of her Head, as being his body, and redeemed, juſtified, and ſanctified in and by him.

Ver. 23—24. We *dwell* in God by a happy relation to him, and ſpiritual union with him, through his Son, and by an holy converſe with him; and God *dwells* in us by his word, and our faith fixed on him, and by the operations of his Spirit.

CHAP. V.

Ver. 1—5. Our love to the children of God appears to be ſound and genuine when we love them, not merely upon any ſecular account, as becauſe, they are rich, or learned, or kind to us, or of our denomination among religious parties; but becauſe they are God's children, his regenerating grace appears in them, his image and ſuperſcription is upon them, and ſo in them God himſelf is loved. Thus we ſee what that love to the brethren is, which is ſo expreſſed in this Epiſtle, it is love to them as the children of God, and the adopted brethren of Chriſt.

Faith is the cauſe of victory over the world; for, 1. In and by faith we cleave to Chriſt, in contempt of, and oppoſition to, the world.—2. Faith works in and by love to God and Chriſt, and ſo withdraws us from the love of the world.—3. Faith ſanctifies the heart, and purifies it from thoſe ſenſual luſts, by which the world obtains ſuch ſway and dominion over ſouls.—It receives and derives ſtrength from the object of it, the Son of God, for conquering the frowns and flatteries of the world.—5. It obtains by goſpel promiſe a right to the in-dwelling Spirit of grace, which is greater than he that dwells in the world.—6. It ſees an inviſible world at hand, with which this world is not worthy to be compared, and which it tells the ſoul, in which it reſides, it muſt be continually prepared to enter.

II. JOHN.

Here we find a canonical Epiſtle inſcribed (principally) not only to a ſingle perſon, but to one alſo of the ſofter ſex: and no wonder that an heroine in chriſtian religion, honoured by divine Providence, and diſtinguiſhed by divine grace, ſhould be dignified by an apoſtolical Epiſtle.

Ver. 1—2. The ground of the love and reſpect paid to *this lady and her children* is ſaid to be *for the truth's ſake*, (or true religion's ſake.) Chriſtian love is founded upon the appearance of chriſtian vital religion.

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The apoſtle and the other chriſtians loved this lady, not ſo much for her honor as her holineſs; not ſo much for her bounty as her ſerious chriſtianity.

Ver. 3—4. From the apoſtle's joy reſpecting the children of this elect lady, we may obſerve that it is pleaſant to ſee children tread in good parent's ſteps; and they that ſee this may well congratulate their parents thereupon; and that both to excite their thankfulneſs to God for, and to enlarge their comfort in, ſo great a bleſſing.

III. JOHN.

Chriſtian communion is exerted and cheriſhed by letter. Chriſtians are to be commended in the practical proof of their profeſſed ſubjection to the goſpel of Chriſt. The animating and countenancing of generous and public-ſpirited perſons, is doing good to many. To this end, the apoſtle ſends this encouraging Epiſtle to Gaius, in which alſo he complains of the quite oppoſite ſpirit and practice of a certain miniſter, and confirms the good report concerning another more worthy to be imitated.

Ver. 1—2. Here is, 1. The apoſtle's good opinion of his friend, that his *soul prospered*. There is ſuch a thing as *soul prosperity*; the greateſt bleſſing on this ſide heaven.

2. His good wiſh for his friend, that his body may *prosper and be in health*, as well as his *soul*. Grace and health are two rich companions: grace will improve health, health will employ grace.

JUDE.

THIS Epiſtle, as ſome others are, is ſtiled general, or catholic, for that it is not directed to any particular family, perſon, or church, but to the whole ſociety of chriſtians of that time, lately converted to the faith of Chriſt, whether from Judaiſm or Paganiſm. And it is and will be of ſtanding, laſting, and ſpecial uſe in and to the church as long as chriſtianity, that is, as time ſhall laſt. It is deſigned to warn us againſt ſeducers and their ſeduction, to inſpire us with a warm love to, and an hearty concern for truth, and that in the cloſeſt conjunction with holineſs, of which charity, or ſincere unbiaſſed brotherly love is a moſt eſſential character and inſeparable branch.

Ver. 4. *They are the worst of ungodly men who turn the grace of God into lasciviousness,* i. e. who take encouragement to ſin more boldly, becauſe the grace of God hath abounded and doth ſtill abound ſo wonderfully: who are hardened in their impieties by the extent and fulneſs of goſpel grace, the deſign of which is to reduce men from ſin, and bring them unto God.

Ver. 17—24. Obſerve, 1. That the glory of the Lord will ſhortly be preſent. *Every eye shall see him*, Rev. i. 7. This is now the object of our faith, but hereafter it will be the object of our ſenſe; *whom we now believe in, him we shall shortly see*, to our unſpeakable joy and comfort—or inexpreſſible terror and conſternation, 1 Pet. i. 8.

2. That all real, ſincere believers ſhall be preſented, at the Redeemer's appearance and coming, by Him, their glorious Head, to the Father, in order to his approbation, acceptance, and reward. They were given to him of the Father, *and of all that were so given him he has lost none*, nor will loſe any one, not an individual, a ſingle ſoul, but will preſent them all perfectly holy and happy, when he ſhall ſurrender his mediatorial kingdom *to his* God and our God, his Father and our Father, John vi. 39. with chap. xvii. 12. 1 Cor. xv. 24.

3. When believers ſhall be *presented faultless* it will be *with exceeding joy*. Alas! now our faults fill us with fears, doubts, and ſorrows; but *be of good cheer*, if we are ſincere, we ſhall be, (our dear Redeemer has undertaken for it,) we ſhall be *presented faultless*. Where there is no ſin, there will be no ſorrow. Where there is the perfection of holineſs, there will be the perfection of joy. Surely, the God who can and will do all this, is worthy to have *glory, majesty, dominion, and power* aſcribed to him, both now and for ever! And to this we may well, with the apoſtle, affix our hearty *Amen*.

REVELATION.

FROM the beginning the church of God hath been bleſſed with prophecy. That glorious prediction of breaking the ſerpents head, was the ſtay and ſupport of the patriarchal age, and the many prophecies which were concerning the Meſſiah to come, were the goſpel of the Old Teſtament. Chriſt himſelf prophesied of the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, and about the time in which that was accompliſhed, he intruſted the apoſtle John with this book of Revelation, to deliver it to the church as a prediction of the moſt important events that ſhould happen to it to the end of time, for the ſupport of the faith of his people, and the direction of their hope.

It is called the Revelation, becauſe God therein diſcovers thoſe things which could never have been ſifted out by the reaſonings of human underſtanding; thoſe deep things of God which no man knows but the Spirit of God, and thoſe to whom he reveals them.

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CHAP. I.

Ver. 1—2. Here we have what we may call the pedigree of this book.

1. *It is the Revelation of Jesus Christ.* The whole book is ſo: for all *revelation* comes through Chriſt, and all centers in him; and eſpecially *in these last days God has spoken to us by his Son*, and concerning his Son.

2. It is *a revelation which God gave unto Christ.* Though Chriſt is himſelf God, and as ſuch, has light and life in himſelf, yet as he ſuſtains the office of *Mediator between God and man*, he receives his inſtructions from his Father. Our Lord Jeſus is the great truſtee of divine *revelation.* It is to him we owe the knowledge we have of what we are to expect from God, and what he expects from us.

3. This revelation Chriſt ſent and ſignified by his angel. Obſerve here, The admirable order of divine revelation. God gave it to Christ, and Chriſt employed an angel to communicate it to the churches.

4. The angel ſignified it to the apoſtle John. As the angels are the meſſengers of Chriſt, the miniſters are the meſſengers of the churches. John was the apoſtle choſen for this ſervice. Some think he was the only one ſurviving, the reſt having ſealed their teſtimony with their blood. This was to be the laſt book of divine revelation, and therefore notified to the church by the laſt of the apoſtles.

5. John was to deliver this revelation to the church; to all his ſervants. For the revelation was not deſigned only for the uſe of Chriſt's extraordinary ſervants, the miniſters; but for all his ſervants, the members of the church.

CHAP. II.

Ver. 8—11. Obſerve, 1. That there is not only a firſt, but a *second death;* a death after the body is dead.

2. This *second death* is unſpeakably worſe than the firſt *death*, both in the dying pangs and agonies of it, which are the agonies of the ſoul, without any mixture of ſupport, and in the duration, it is *eternal death*, dying the *death*, to die, and to be always dying. This is hurtful indeed, it is fatally hurtful to all who fall under it.

3. From this hurtful, this deſtructive *death*, Chriſt will ſave all his faithful ſervants. The *second* death ſhall have no power over thoſe that are *partakers of the first resurrection; the first death shall not hurt them*, and *the second death shall have no power over them.*

Ver. 12—17. 1. The word of God is a ſword. It is a weapon both offenſive and defenſive. It is in the hand of God, able to ſlay both ſin and ſinners.

2. It is a ſharp ſword. No heart ſo hard but it is able to wound; no knot ſo cloſely tied but it is able to cut.

3. It is *a sword with two edges*, it turns and cuts every way. There is the *edge* of the law against the transgressors of that dispensation, and the *edge* of the gospel against the despisers of that dispensation.

CHAP. III.

Ver. 14—22. Lukewarmness or indifference in religion is the worst temper in the world. If religion be a real thing, it is the most excellent thing, and therefore we should be in good earnest in it. If it be not a real thing, it is the vilest imposture, and we should be earnest against it.

Our blessed Lord, the Counsellor, always gives the best advice, and that which is most suitable to the sinner's case; as here, 1. These people were poor. *Christ counsels them to buy of him gold tried in the fire, that they might be rich.* He lets them know where they might have true riches, and how they might have them. They might have them, from himself: and how must they have this true gold from him? They must buy it. That seems to be unsaying all again. How can they that are poor buy gold? Why, as they may buy of Christ wine and milk, that is, *without money and without price.*

2. These people were naked. Christ tells them where they might have clothing, and such as would cover the shame of their nakedness. This they must receive from Christ; and they must only put off their filthy rags, that they might put on the white

raiment that he had purchaſed and provided for them. His own imputed righteouſneſs for juſtification, and the garments of holineſs and ſanctification.

3. They were blind, and he counſels them to buy of him eye-ſalve that they might ſee; give up their own wiſdom and reaſon, which is but blindneſs in the things of God, and reſign themſelves to his word and Spirit, and their eyes ſhall be opened to ſee their way and their end, their duty and their intereſt.

CHAP. IV.

Ver. 8—11. Obſerve, The ground of the church's adoration of God, which is threefold.

1. He is the Creator of all things, the first cauſe: and none but the Creator of all things ſhould be adored; no created thing can be the object of religious worſhip.

2. He is the preſerver of all things, and his preſervation is a continual creation.

3. He is the final cauſe of all things; *for thy pleasure they are and were created.*

CHAP. VI.

The propheſies of this book are divided into ſeven ſeals opened, ſeven trumpets ſounding, and ſeven vials poured out. It is ſuppoſed the opening of the ſeven ſeals diſcloſes the providences which were

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converſant about the church in the three firſt centuries, from the aſcenſion of our Lord and Saviour, to the reign of Conſtantine.

Ver. 1, 2. Obſerve, 1. That the ſucceſsful progreſs of the goſpel of Chriſt is a glorious ſight, worth beholding, the moſt pleaſant and welcome ſight that a good man can ſee in this world.

2. That, whatever convulſions and revolutions happen in the ſtates and kingdoms of the world, the kingdom of Chriſt ſhall be eſtabliſhed and enlarged in ſpite of all oppoſition.

3. That a morning of opportunity uſually goes before a night of calamity; the goſpel is preached before the plagues are poured out.

4. Chriſt's work is not all done at once. We are ready to think when the goſpel goes forth, it ſhould carry all the world before it, but it often meets with oppſition, and moves ſlowly: however, Chriſt will do his own work effectually, in his own time and way.

Ver. 3—8. Obſerve, 1. There is a natural as well as judicial connection between one judgment and another. War is a waſting calamity, and draws ſcarcity and famine after it; and famine, not allowing men proper ſuſtenance, and forcing them to take that which is unwholeſome, often draws the peſtilence after it.

2. God's quiver is full of arrows, he is never at a loſs for ways and means to puniſh a wicked people.

3. In the book of God's counſels he has prepared judgments for ſcorners, as well as mercy for returning ſinners.

4. In the book of the ſcriptures God hath publiſhed threatnings againſt the wicked, as well as promiſes to the righteous.

Ver. 9—17. Note, 1. That perſecutors can only kill the body, and after that there is no more that they can do: their ſouls live.

2. God hath provided a good place in the better world for thoſe who are *faithful to death*, and are not allowed a place any longer on earth.

3. That holy martyrs are very near to Chriſt in heaven: they have the higheſt place there.

4. That it is not their own death, but the ſacrifice of Chriſt, which gives them a reception into heaven, and a reward there. They do not waſh their robes in their own blood, but *in the blood of the Lamb*.

CHAP. VII.

Ver. 9—12. Obſerve, 1. The poſture of theſe praiſing ſaints: *they stood before the throne and before the Lamb;* before the Creator and the Mediator.

2. Their habit: *they were clothed with white robes, and had palms in their hands.* They were inveſted with the robes of juſtification, holineſs, and victory, and had *palms in their hands*, as conquerors uſed to appear in their triumphs.

3. Their employment: they cried with a loud voice, ſaying, *Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb.* Both the Father and the Son are joined together in theſe praiſes.

CHAP. VIII.

Moſt expoſitors agree, the ſeven ſeals repreſent the interval between the apoſtle's time and the reign of Conſtantine, but the ſeven trumpets are deſigned to repreſent the riſe of Antichriſt, ſome time after the empire became christian. In this chapter we have the preface, or prelude, to the ſounding of the trumpets.

Ver. 1—6. Obſerve, 1. *All the saints* are a praying people: none of the children of God are born dumb.

2. Times of danger ſhould be praying times, and ſo ſhould times of great expectation.

3. *The prayers of the saints themselves* ſtand in need of *the incense and intercession* of Chriſt to make them acceptable and effectual, and there is proviſion made by Chriſt for that purpoſe: he has his incenſe, his *censer*, and his *altar*; he is all himſelf to his people.

4. *The prayers of the saints* come up before God in a cloud of *incense*. No prayer thus recommended was ever denied audience and acceptance.

CHAP. XII.

Ver. 1—11. We ſee how the church is repreſented in this viſion,

1. As a *woman*, the weaker part of the world, but the ſpouſe of Chriſt, and the mother of the ſaints.

2. As *clothed with the sun*, the imputed righteouſneſs of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt.

3. As having *the moon under her feet*; that is, the world. She ſtands upon it, but lives above it.

4. As having on her head *a crown of twelve stars*, that is, the doctrine of the goſpel preached by the twelve apoſtles, which is a crown of glory to all true believers.

5. As in travail, crying out, and *pained to be delivered*. She was pregnant, and now in pain to bring forth a holy progeny to Chriſt.

CHAP. XIV.

Ver. 6—19. In this part of the chapter we have three angels or meſſengers ſent from heaven, to give notice of the fall of Babylon, and of thoſe things that were antecedent and conſequent to that great event.

1. The firſt *angel* was ſent on an errand antecedent to it, and that was *to preach the everlasting gospel*. Obſerve,

(1.) *The gospel is an everlasting gospel*. It is ſo in its nature, and ſhall be ſo in its conſequences.

2. It is a work fit for an *angel to preach this everlasting gospel*. Such is the dignity, and ſuch the

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difficulty of that work! and yet we have this treasure in earthen vessels.

3. That *the everlasting gospel* is of great concern to all the world, and, as it is the concern of all, it is very much to be desired that it should be made known to all, even to *every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.*

4. That the gospel is the great means whereby men are brought to *fear God, and to give glory to him.*

5. When idolatry creeps into the churches of God, it is by *the preaching of the gospel,* attended by the power of the Holy Spirit, that men are turned from idols to serve the living God.

2. The second *angel* follows the other, and proclaims the actual fall of Babylon. By Babylon is generally understood Rome, which was before called Sodom and Egypt, for wickedness and cruelty; and is now first called Babylon, for her pride and idolatry.

Observe, 1. What God has foreordained and foretold shall be done as certainly as if it were done already.

2. The greatness of the papal Babylon will not be able to prevent her fall, but will make it more dreadful and remarkable.

3. The wickedness of Babylon, in corrupting, debauching, and intoxicating the nations round about her, will make her fall just, and will declare the righteousness of God in her utter ruin.

3. *A third angel* follows the other two, and gives warning to all of that divine vengeance which would

overtake all thoſe that obſtinately adhered to the anti-chriſtian intereſt after God had thus proclaimed its downfal.

Ver. 13—20. Obſerve, 1. The deſcription of thoſe that *are* and ſhall be *blessed*, ſuch as die in the Lord.

2. The demonſtration of their bleſsedneſs; *they rest from their labours and their works follow them.*

1. They are *blessed* in their *rest; they rest from all sin, temptation, sorrow, and persecution.*

2. They are *blessed* in their *recompence; their works follow them.* They do not go before them, as their title or price of purchaſe, but *follow them,* as their evidence of having lived and *died in the Lord.*

3. They are happy in the time of their dying, when they have lived to ſee the cauſe of God reviving, the peace of the church returning, and the wrath of God falling upon their idolatrous cruel enemies.

CHAP. XV.

Hitherto, according to the judgment of very eminent expoſitors, God had repreſented to his ſervant John,

1. The ſtate of the church under the Pagan powers, in the ſix ſeals opened; and then,

2. The ſtate of the church under the papal powers, in the viſion of the ſix trumpets that began to ſound upon the opening of the ſeventh ſeal.

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3. And then is inſerted a more general and brief account of the paſt, preſent, and future ſtate of the church, in the little book, &c. He now proceeds,

4. To ſhew him how Antichriſt ſhould be deſtroyed, by what ſteps that deſtruction ſhould be accompliſhed in the vision of the ſeven vials.

Ver. 5—8. Obſerve, How theſe angels appeared, coming out of heaven to execute their commiſſion. *The temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened.* Here is an alluſion to the holiest of all in *the tabernacle and temple*, where was the *mercy-seat, covering the ark of the testimony*, where the high-prieſt made interceſſion, and God communed with his people, and heard their prayers. Now by this, as it is here mentioned, we may underſtand,

1. That in the judgments God was now about to execute upon the antichriſtian intereſt, he was fulfilling the propheſies and promiſes of his word and *covenant*, which was there always before him, and of which he was *ever mindful.*

2. That in this work he was anſwering the prayers of the people, which were offered to him by their great High-Prieſt.

3. That he was herein avenging the quarrel of his own Son, and our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, whoſe offices and authority had been uſurped, his name diſhonoured, and the great deſigns of his death oppoſed by Antichriſt and his adherents.

4. That he was opening a wider door of liberty

for his people to worſhip him in numerous ſolemn aſſemblies without the fear of their enemies.

CHAP. XVIII.

Ver. 9—19. Here we have a doleful lamentation made by Babylon's friends for her fall; and now obſerve,

1. Who are the mourners; thoſe that had been bewitched by her fornication, and thoſe that had been ſharers in her ſenſual pleaſures, and thoſe that had been gainers by her wealth and trade, *the kings and the merchants of the earth.*

2. What was the manner of their mourning. *They stood afar off.* They durſt not come nigher. Even Babylon's friends will ſtand at a diſtance from her fall. Though they had been partakers with her in her ſins, and in her ſinful pleaſures and profits, they were not willing to bear a ſhare in her plagues.

They made a grievous outcry. Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city!

They wept and cast dust upon their heads. The pleaſures of ſin are but for a ſeaſon, and they will end in diſmal ſorrow; and all thoſe who rejoice in the ſucceſs of the church's enemies, will ſhare with them in their downfal.

3. What was the cauſe of their mourning; not their ſin but their puniſhment. They did not lament their fall into idolatry, and luxury and perſecution; but their fall into ruin; the loſs of their traffic, and

of their wealth and power. The ſpirit of Antichriſt is a worldly ſpirit, and their ſorrow is a mere worldly ſorrow. They do not lament for the anger of God which was now fallen upon them; but for the loſs of their outward comforts. All things which were dainty and goodly are departed from thee, and thou ſhalt find them no more at all. The church of God may fall for a time, but ſhe ſhall riſe again; but the fall of Babylon will be an utter overthrow, like that of Sodom and Gomorrah. Godly ſorrow is ſome ſupport under affliction, but mere worldly ſorrow adds to the calamity.

CHAP. XIX.

Ver. 1—4. The fall of Babylon being fixed, finiſhed, and declared to be irrecoverable in the foregoing chapter, this begins with a holy triumph over her, purſuance to the order given forth, chap. xviii. 20. *Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles, and prophets.* They now gladly answer the call, and here you have,

1. The form of their thankſgiving, in that heavenly and moſt comprehenſive word, *Alleluia, praise ye the Lord.* With this they begin, with this they go on, and with this they end. Their prayers are now turned into praiſes, their hoſannas end in halleluias.

2. The matter of their thankſgiving; they praiſe God for the truth of his word, and the righteouſneſs

of his providential conduct; especially in this great event, the ruin of Babylon, which had been a mother, nurse and nest of idolatry, lewdness, and cruelty; for which signal example of divine justice they ascribe *Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto our God.*

3. The effect of these praises; when the angels and saints cried, *Alleluia*, her fire burned more fiercely, and *her smoke ascended for ever and ever.* The surest way to have our deliverances continued and completed, is to give God the glory of what he has done for us. Praising God for what we have, is praying in the most effectual manner for what is yet further to be done for us; the praises of the saints blow up the fire of God's wrath against the common enemy.

4. The blessed harmony between the angels and the saints in this triumphant song.

CHAP. XX.

Ver. 11—15. The utter destruction of the devil's kingdom, very properly leads to an account of the day of judgment, which will determine every man's everlasting state.

Observe, 1. We behold *the throne*, and tribunal of judgment, *great and white*, very glorious, and perfectly just and righteous.

2. The appearance of the judge, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ, who then puts on such majesty

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and terror, that *the earth and the heaven fled before his face, and there was no place found for them.*

3. The persons to be judged; *the dead, small and great;* both young and old, low and high, poor and rich; none so mean, but they have some talents to account for; and none so great, as to avoid the jurisdiction of this court.

4. The rule of judgment settled; *the books were opened.* What books? Why the book of God's omniscience, who is *greater than our consciences, and knows all things.* There is a book of remembrance with him both for good and bad; and *the book* of the sinner's conscience, which, though formerly secret, will now be *opened;* and *another book shall be opened,* the book of the scriptures, the statute-book of heaven, the rule of life.

5. The cause to be tried, and that is, the *works of men,* what they have done, and whether it be good or evil.

CHAP. XXII.

Hitherto the prophecy of this book has presented to us a very remarkable mixture of light and shade, prosperity and adversity, mercy and judgment, in the conduct of Divine Providence towards the church in the world: now, at the close of all, the day breaks, and the shadows flee away; a new world appears, the former being passed away.

Ver. 1—8. This new and blessed state will be free from all trouble and sorrow; for,

1. All the effects of former trouble ſhall be done away. God himſelf, as their tender Father, with his kind hand, ſhall wipe away the tears of his children.

2. All the cauſes of future ſorrow shall be for ever removed. There ſhall be neither death nor pain; and therefore no ſorrow nor crying.

Ver. 9—21. There is nothing magnificent enough in this world fully to ſet forth the glory of heaven. Could we in the glaſs of a ſtrong imagination contemplate ſuch a city as is here deſcribed, even as to the exterior part of it; ſuch a wall, and ſuch gates, how amazing, how glorious would the proſpect be! and yet this is but a faint and dim repreſentation of what heaven is in itſelf.

Ver. 22—27. God in Chriſt will be an everlaſting fountain of knowledge and joy to the ſaints in heaven; and if ſo, there is no need of the ſun or moon, no more than we have need to ſet up candles at noon day, when the ſun ſhineth in its ſtrength.

In heaven the ſaints ſhall have no impure thing remaining in them. There the ſaints ſhall have no impure perſons admitted among them.

In the churches on earth, ſometimes abominable things are done, ſolemn ordinances profaned, and proſtituted to men openly vicious, for worldly ends; but no ſuch abominations can have place in heaven: for, it is free from hypocrites, ſuch as make lies, ſay they are Jews, and are not, but do lie.

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CHAP. XXII.

Ver. 6—19. He that adds to the word of God, draws down upon himſelf *all the plagues written in this book;* and he that takes any thing away from it, cuts himſelf off from all the promiſes and privileges of it. This ſanction is like a flaming ſword to guard the canon of the ſcripture from profane hands. Such a fence as this God ſet about the law, Deut. iv. 2. and the whole Old Teſtament, Mal. iv. 4. and now in the moſt ſolemn manner about the whole Bible: aſſuring us that it is a book of the moſt ſacred nature, divine authority, and of the laſt importance, and therefore the peculiar care of the great God.

Ver. 20—21. We are now come to the concluſion of the whole; and that in three things,

1. Chriſt's farewell to his church. He ſeems now, after he had been diſcovering theſe things to his people on earth, to take leave of them and return to heaven: but he parts with them in great kindneſs, and aſſures them it ſhall not be long before he comes again to them; *behold I come quickly.* As when he aſcended into heaven after his reſurrection, he parted with a promiſe of his gracious preſence, ſo here he parts with a promiſe of a ſpeedy return.

2. The church's hearty echo to Chriſt's promiſe; declaring her firm belief of it, *Amen, so it is,* ſo it

ſhall be; and expreſſing her earneſt deſire of it, *even so, come Lord Jesus.*

1. The Bible ends with a clear proof of the Godhead of Chriſt, ſince the Spirit of God teaches the apoſtle to bleſs his people in the name of Chriſt, and to beg from Chriſt a bleſſing for them; this is a proper act of adoration.

2. Nothing ſhould be more deſired by us, than that the grace of Chriſt may be with us in this world, to prepare us for the glory of Chriſt in the other world. It is by his grace that we muſt be kept in a joyful expectation of his glory, and fitted for it and preſerved to it: and his glorious appearance will be welcome and joyful to thoſe that are partakers of his grace and favors here; and therefore to this moſt comprehensive prayer we ſhould all add our hearty Amen; moſt earneſtly thirſting after greater meaſures of the gracious influences of the bleſſed Jeſus in our ſouls, and his gracious preſence with us, till glory has perfected all his grace towards us, for he is a sun and a ſhield, *he gives grace, and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.—Amen, and Amen.*

FINIS.

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APPENDIX.

BEING

EXTRACTS

FROM

THE GENERAL CONTENTS OF THOSE

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GENESIS.

WE have now before us,

1. The Holy Bible, or Book, for ſo Bible ſignifies. We call it The Book by way of eminency, for it is incomparably the beſt book that ever was written; the Book of Books, ſhining like the ſun in the firmament of learning; other valuable and uſeful books, like the moon and ſtars, borrowing their light from it. We call it the Holy Book, becauſe it was written by holy men, indited by the Holy Ghoſt; it is perfectly pure from all falſhood and corrupt intention, and the manifeſt tendency of it is to promote holineſs among men. The great things of God's law and goſpel are here written to us, that they might be reduced to a greater certainty, might ſpread further, remain longer, and be tranſmitted to diſtant places and ages more pure and entire than they poſſibly could be by report and tradition. The ſcriptures, or writings of the ſeveral inſpired penmen, from Moſes down to John, in which divine light, like that of the morning, ſhone gradually, are all put together in this bleſſed Bible, which, thanks be to God, we have in our hands, and they make as perfect a day, as we are to expect on this ſide heaven. Every part was good, but all together very good. *This is the light that shines in a dark place*, 2 Pet. i. 19. and a dark place indeed the world would be without the Bible

2. We have before us that part of the Bible which we call the Old Teſtament, containing the acts and monuments of the church from the creation, almoſt to the coming of Chriſt in the fleſh, which was about four thouſand years; the truths then revealed, the laws then enacted, the devotions then paid, the propheſies then given, and the events that were concerning that diſtinguiſhed body, ſo far as God ſaw fit to preſerve to us the knowledge of them. This is called a Teſtament or Covenant, becauſe it was a ſettled declaration of the will of God concerning man in a federal way, and had its force from the deſigned death of the great Teſtator, *the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world*, Rev. xiii. 8. It is called the Old Teſtament with relation to the New, which doth not cancel and ſuperſede it, but crown and perfect it, by the bringing in of that better hope which was typified and foretold in it. The Old Teſtament ſtill remains glorious, though the New far exceeds in glory, 2 Cor. iii. 9.

3. We have before us that part of the Old Teſtament which we call the Pentateuch, or five Books of Moſes, that ſervant of the Lord who excelled all the other prophets, and typified the Great Prophet. In our Saviour's diſtribution of the books of the Old Teſtament into the Law, the Prophets and the Pſalms, or Hagiographa, theſe are the Law; for they contain not only the law given to Iſrael in the four laſt, but the laws given to Adam, to Noah, and to Abraham in the firſt. Theſe five books were, for aught we know, the firſt that ever were written; for we have not the

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leaſt mention of any writing in all the books of Geneſis, nor till God bade Moſes write, Exod. xvii. 14. And ſome think Moſes himſelf never learned to write till God ſet him his copy in the writings of the Ten Commandments upon the tables of ſtone. However we are ſure theſe books are the moſt ancient writings now extant, and therefore beſt able to give us a ſatisfactory account of the moſt ancient things.

4. We have before us the firſt and longeſt of theſe five books, which we call Geneſis, written, ſome think, when Moſes was in Midian, for the inſtruction and comfort of his ſuffering brethren in Egypt. I rather think he wrote it in the wilderneſs, after he had been in the mount with God, where probably he received full and particular inſtructions for the writing of it. Geneſis is a name borrowed from the Greek. It ſignifies the original, or generation. Fitly is this book ſo called, for it is a hiſtory of originals; the creation of the world, the entrance of ſin and death into it, the invention of arts, the riſe of nations, and eſpecially the planting of the church, and the ſtate of it in its early days. It is alſo a hiſtory of generations, the generations of Adam, Noah, Abraham, &c. not endleſs but uſeful genealogies.—The beginning of the New Teſtament is called Geneſis too, Mat. i. 1. The Book of the Geneſis or Generation of Jeſus Chriſt. Bleſſed be God for that Book which ſhews us our remedy, as this opens our wound. Lord, open our eyes that we may ſee the wonderous things both of thy Law and Goſpel!

EXODUS.

Moſes having in the firſt book of his hiſtory preſerved and tranſmitted the records of the church, while it exiſted in private families, comes in this ſecond book to give us an account of its growth into a great nation; and as the former furniſheth us with the beſt Œconomics, ſo this with the beſt Politics. The beginning of the former book ſhews us how God formed the world for himſelf, the beginning of this ſhews us how he *formed Israel for himself*, and both to *shew forth his praise*, Iſa. lxiii. 21. There we have the creation of the world in hiſtory, here the redemption of the world in type. The Greek tranſlators called this book *Exodus*, which ſignifies a *departure*, or *going out*, becauſe it begins with the ſtory of the going out of the children of Iſrael from Egypt.

1. The accompliſhment of the promiſes made before to Abraham, *to chap.* xix. And then,

2. The eſtabliſhment of the ordinances, which were afterwards obſerved by Iſrael, *thence to the end.* There are more types of Chriſt in this book, than perhaps in any other book of the Old Teſtament; for Moſes wrote of him, John v. 46. And the way of man's reconciliation to God, and coming into covenant and communion with him by a mediator, is here variouſly repreſented; and it is of great uſe to us for the illuſtration of the New Teſtament, now we have that to aſſiſt us in the explication of the Old.

LEVITICUS.

There is nothing hiſtorical in all this book of Leviticus, except the account it gives us chap. viii. and ix. of the conſecration of the prieſthood; chap. x. of the puniſhment of Nadab and Abihu, by the hand of God, for offering ſtrange fire; and that of Shelomith's ſon, by the hand of the magiſtrate, for blaſphemy, chap. xxiv. All the reſt of the book is taken up with the laws, chiefly the eccleſiaſtical laws, which God gave to Iſrael by Moſes, concerning their ſacrifices and offerings, their meats and drinks, and divers waſhings, and other peculiarities by which God did ſet that people apart for himſelf, and diſtinguiſh them from other nations: all which were ſhadows of good things to come, which are realiſed and ſuperſeded by the goſpel of Chriſt. — We call the book Leviticus, from the Septuagint, becauſe it contains the laws and ordinances of the Levitical prieſthood (as it is called Heb. vii. 11.) and the miniſtrations of it. The Levites were principally charged with theſe inſtitutions, both to do their part, and to teach the people theirs. The remaining record of theſe abrogated laws is of uſe to us, for the ſtrengthening of our faith in Jeſus Chriſt, as *the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world;* and for the increaſe of our thankfulneſs to God, that by him we are freed from the yoke of the ceremonial law, and live in the times of reformation.

NUMBERS.

The titles of the five books of Moſes, which we uſe in our Bibles, are all borrowed from the Greek tranſlation of the Seventy, the moſt ancient verſion of the Old Teſtament that we know of: but the title of this book only we turn into Engliſh. In all the reſt we retain the Greek word itſelf; for which difference I know no reaſon, but that the Latin tranſlators have generally done the ſame. This book was thus intitled, becauſe of the numbers of the children of Iſrael, ſo often mentioned in this book, and ſo well worthy to give a title to it, becauſe it was the remarkable accompliſhment of God's promiſe to Abraham, that his ſeed ſhould be as the ſtars of heaven for multitude. It alſo relates to two numberings of them, one at mount Sinai, chap. i. the other in the plains of Moab, thirty-nine years after, chap. xxvi. and not three men the ſame in the laſt account that were in the firſt. An abſtract of much of this book we have in a few words, Pſalm xcv. 10. *Forty years long was I grieved with this generation:* and an application of it to ourſelves, Heb. iv. 1. *Let us fear leſt we ſeem to come ſhort.* Many conſiderable nations there were now in being, that dwelt in cities and fortified towns, of which no notice is taken, no account kept, by the ſacred hiſtory: but very exact records are kept of the affairs of a handful of people, that dwelt in tents, and wandered ſtrangely in a wilderneſs, becauſe they were the children of the covenant: *For the Lord's portion is his people, Jacob is the lot of his inheritance.*

DEUTERONOMY.

This book is a repetition of very much both of the hiſtory and of the laws contained in the three foregoing books; which repetition Moſes delivered to Iſrael both by word of mouth, that it might affect, and by writing that it might abide, a little before his death. There is no new hiſtory in it but that of the death of Moſes in the laſt chapter; nor any new revelation to Moſes, for aught appears; but the former laws are repeated and commented upon, explained, and enlarged, and ſome particular precepts added to them, with copious reaſonings for the enforcing of them. The Greek interpreters call it *Deuteronomy,* which ſignifies, the *second law;* or, *a second edition of the law;* not with amendments, for there needed none, but with additions, for the further direction of the people, in divers caſes not mentioned before. The whole book was delivered by Moſes to Iſrael in the laſt month of his life, and contains the hiſtory but of two months. See how buſy that great and good man was to do good, when he knew that his time was ſhort; how quick his motion when he drew near his reſt. Thus we have more recorded of what our bleſſed Saviour ſaid and did in the laſt week of his life, than in any other. The laſt words of eminent perſons do, or ſhould make, deep impreſſions. Obſerve, for the honour of this book, that when our Saviour would anſwer the Devil's temptations with *It is written,* he fetched all his quotations out of this book, Mat. iv. 4, 8. 10.

JOSHUA.

We have now before us the *book of Joshua*, so called, perhaps not because it was written by him, for that is uncertain. However that be, it is written concerning him, and if any other wrote it, it was collected out of his journals, or memoirs. It contains the history of Israel under the command and government of Joshua, in which he was a great example of wisdom, courage, fidelity, and piety, to all who are in places of publ c trust. But that is not all the use which is to be made of this history. We may see in it,

1. *Much of God*, and *his Providence*, his power in the kingdom of nature, his justice in punishing the Canaanites when the *measure of their iniquities was full*; his faithfulness to his covenant with the patriarchs; his kindness to his people Israel, notwithstanding their provocations.

2. *Much of Christ* and *his grace*. Though Joshua is not expressly mentioned in the New Testament as a type of Christ, yet all agree he was a very eminent one. He bore our Saviour's name, as did also another type of him, Joshua the high-priest, Zech. vi. 11, 12. Joshua saves God's people from the Canaanites; our Lord Jesus saves them *from their sins*. Christ, as, Joshua, is the *captain of our salvation*, a *leader and commander of the people*, to tread Satan under their feet, and to put them in possession of the heavenly Canaan.

JUDGES.

This is called in the Hebrew, the *Book of Judges*, which the Syriac and Arabic verſions enlarge upon, and call it, *The book of the Judges of the children of Israel.* The judgments of that nation being peculiar, ſo were their Judges, whoſe office differed vaſtly from that of the Judges of other nations. It is the hiſtory of the *commonwealth of Israel*, during the government of the Judges from Othniel to Eli; ſo much of it as God ſaw fit to tranſmit to us. It contains the hiſtory (according to Dr. Lightfoot's computation) of two hundred and ninety-nine years. Four of the Judges of Iſrael are canonized, Heb. xi. 32. Gideon, Barak, Samſon, and Jephtha. The learned Biſhop Patrick thinks the prophet Samuel was penman of this book.

RUTH.

This ſhort hiſtory of the domeſtic affairs of one particular family, fitly follows the book of Judges, the events related here happening in the days of the Judges, and fitly goes before the books of Samuel, becauſe in the cloſe it introduceth David. It is probable Samuel was the penman of it. It relates not miracles or laws, wars or victories, or the revolutions of ſtates; but the affliction firſt, and afterwards the comfort of Naomi; the converſion firſt, and afterwards the preferment of Ruth.

The deſign of this book is,

1. To lead to Providence; to ſhew how converſant it is about our private concerns, and to teach us in them all to have an eye to it, acknowledging God in all our ways, and in all events that are concerning us.

2. To lead to Chriſt, who deſcended from Ruth, and part of whoſe genealogy concludes the book, from whence it is fetched into Matth. i. And in the converſion of Ruth the Moabiteſs, and the bringing of her into the pedigree of the Meſſiah, we have a type of the calling of the Gentiles in due time into the fellowſhip of Chriſt Jeſus our Lord.

I. SAMUEL.

This book, and that which follows it, bears the name of *Samuel* in the title, not becauſe he was the penman of them, except of ſo much of them as fell within his own time, to the twenty-fifth chapter of the firſt book, in which we have an account of his death: but becauſe the firſt book begins with a large account of him, his birth and childhood, his life and government; and the reſt of theſe two volumes that are denominated from him contains the hiſtory of the reigns of *Saul* and *David*, who were both anointed by him. It is uncertain who was the penman of them. It is probable *Samuel* wrote the hiſtory of his own time, and that after him ſome of the prophets who were with David, *Nathan*, as likely as any, continued it.

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II. SAMUEL.

This book is the hiſtory of the reign of king David. We had in the foregoing book an account of his deſignation to the government and his ſtruggles with Saul, which ended at length in the death of his perſecutor. This book begins with his acceſſion to the throne, and is entirely taken up with the affairs of the government during the forty years he reigned. It gives us an account of David's triumphs and his troubles. Many things in this hiſtory are very inſtructive; but for the hero, who is the ſubject of it, though in many inſtances he appears here very great, and very good, and very much the favourite of heaven, yet it muſt be confeſſed his honour ſhines brighter in his Pſalms than in his Annals.

I. KINGS.

The two books of Samuel are introductions to the books of the kings, as they relate the original of the royal government in Saul, and of the royal family in David.

Theſe two books give us an account of David's ſucceſſor, Solomon, the diviſion of his kingdom, and the ſucceſſion of the ſeveral kings both of Judah and Iſrael, with an abſtract of their hiſtory down to the captivity. There is in theſe books ſpecial regard had to the houſe and lineage of David, from which Chriſt came. Some of his ſons trod in his ſteps, and others did not. The characters of the kings of Ju-

dah may be thus briefly given. David the devout, Solomon the wiſe, Rehoboam the ſimple, Abiſhai the valiant, Aſa the upright, Jehoſhaphat the religious, Jehoram the wicked, Ahaziah the profane, Joaſh the backſlider, Amaziah the raſh, Uzziah the mighty, Jotham the peaceable, Ahaz the idolator, Hezekiah the reformer, Manaſſeh the penitent, Amon the obſcure, Joſiah the tender-hearted, Johoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah, all wicked, and ſuch as brought ruin preſently on themſelves and their kingdom. The number of the good and bad is pretty near equal, but the reigns of the good were generally long, and thoſe of the bad ſhort. The conſideration of which will make the ſtate of Iſrael not altogether ſo bad in this period as at firſt it ſeems.

II. KINGS.

The ſecond book of the kings is a continuation of the former books. That had an illuſtrious beginning in the glories of the kingdom of Iſrael, when it was entire; this has a melancholy concluſion, in the deſolations of the kingdoms of Iſrael firſt and then of Judah, after they had long been broken into two; for a kingdom divided againſt itſelf cometh to deſtruction. This hiſtory, in the ſeveral paſſages of it, confirms that obſervation of Solomon *that righteouſneſs exalts a nation, but ſin is the reproach of any people.*

I. CHRONICLES.

In common things, repetition is thought needleſs and nauſeous; but in ſacred things *precept must be*

upon precept, and line upon line. To me, ſaith the apoſtle, *to write the ſame things is not grievous, but for you it is ſafe,* Phil. iii. 1. Theſe books of Chronicles are much of them repetition; ſo are much of the ſecond and third of the four Evangeliſts; and yet either here or there, no vain repetitions.

We may be ready to think, of all the books of holy ſcripture, we could beſt ſpare theſe two books of Chronicles: perhaps we might, and yet we could very ill ſpare them, for there are many moſt excellent, uſeful things in them, which we find not elſewhere.

The penman of theſe books is ſuppoſed to be Ezra, that ready ſcribe in the law of the Lord, Ezra, vii. 6.

II. CHRONICLES.

This book begins with the reign of Solomon, and the building of the temple, and thenceforward continues the hiſtory of the kings of Judah to the captivity, and ſo concludes with the fall of that illuſtrious monarchy, and the deſtruction of the temple. That monarchy of the houſe of David, as it was prior in time, ſo it was ſuperior in worth and dignity to all thoſe four celebrated ones which Nebuchadnezzar dreamed of. The Babylonian monarchy I reckon to begin in Nebuchadnezzar himſelf. "Thou art that head of gold" which laſted but about ſeventy years. The Perſian monarchy, in ſeveral families, about one hundred and thirty. The Grecians, in their ſeveral

branches, about three hundred; and three hundred more went far with the Romans. But as I reckon David a greater hero than any of the founders of thoſe monarchies, and Solomon a more magnificent prince than any of thoſe that were the glories of them, ſo the ſucceſſion was kept up in a lineal-deſcent throughout the whole monarchy, which continued conſiderable between four and five hundred years: and after a long eclipſe ſhone forth again in the kingdom of the Meſſiah, *of the increase of whose government and peace there shall be no end.* This hiſtory of the Jewiſh monarchy, as it is more authentic, ſo it is more entertaining and more inſtructive than the hiſtories of any of thoſe monarchies. We had the ſtory of the houſe of David before in the firſt and ſecond book of *Kings*, intermixed with that of the kings of Iſrael, which there took up more room than that of Judah, but here we have it entire. Much is repeated here which we had before; yet many paſſages of the ſtory are enlarged upon, and divers added, which we had not before, eſpecially relating to the affairs of religion; for it is a church-hiſtory, and is written for our learning, to let nations and families know that then, and then only, they can expect to proſper when they keep in the way of their duty to God; for all along the good kings proſpered, and the wicked kings ſuffered.

EZRA.

The Jewiſh church puts on quite another face in this book, from what it had appeared with; its ſtate

much better and more pleaſant than it was of late in Babylon, and yet far inferior to what it had been formerly. The dry bones here live again, but *in the form of a ſervant.* The yoke of their captivity is taken off, but the marks of it in their galled necks remain. Kings we hear no more of; *the crown is fallen from their heads.* Prophets they are bleſſed with, to direct them in their re-eſtabliſhment, but after a while prophesy ceaſeth among them, till the great prophet appears, and his forerunner. The hiſtory of this book is the accompliſhment of Jeremiah's prophesy concerning the return of the Jews out of Babylon, at the end of ſeventy years; and a type of the accompliſhment of the prophecies of the Apocalypſe, concerning the deliverance of the goſpel-church out of the New-Teſtament Babylon. Ezra preſerved the records of that great revolution, and tranſmitted them to the church in this book. His name ſignifies *a helper; and so he was to that people.*

NEHEMIAH.

This book continues the hiſtory of the *children of the captivity;* the poor Jews who were lately returned out of Babylon to their own land. At this time not only the Perſian monarchy flouriſhed in great pomp and power, but Greece and Rome began to be very great, and make a figure. Of the affairs of theſe high and mighty ſtates we have authentic accounts extant; but the ſacred and inſpired hiſtory takes cognizance only of the ſtate of the Jews, and

makes no mention of other nations, but as the Israel of God had dealings with them; for the Lord's portion is his people, they are his peculiar treasure, and in comparison with them the rest of the world is but as lumber: and, in my eye, Ezra the scribe, and Nehemiah the Tirshatha, though neither of them ever wore a crown, commanded an army, or conquered any country, or were famed for philosophy or oratory, yet both of them being pious, praying men, and very serviceable in their day towards the church of God, and the interests of religion, were really greater men and more honourable, not only than any of the Roman consuls or dictators, but than Xenophon or Demosthenes, or Plato himself, (who lived at the same time,) the bright ornaments of Greece. Nehemiah's agency for advancing the settlement of Israel, we have a full account of, in this book of his own commentaries or memoirs, wherein he records not only the works of his hands, but the workings of his heart in the management of public affairs; inserting in the story many devout reflections and ejaculations, which discover in his mind a very deep tincture of serious piety, and are peculiar to his writings.

ESTHER.

How the Providence of God watched over the Jews who were returned out of captivity to their own land, and what great and kind things were done for them, we read in the two foregoing books; but there

were many who ſtaid behind, having not zeal enough for God's houſe, and the holy land and city, to carry them through the difficulties of a removal thither Theſe, one would think, ſhould have been excluded the ſpecial protection of Providence, as unworthy the name of Iſraelites: but our God deals not with us according to our folly and weakneſs. We find in this book, that even thoſe Jews who were ſcattered in the provinces of the heathen, were taken care of, as well as thoſe who were gathered in the land of Judea, and were wonderfully preſerved, when doomed to deſtruction, and appointed as ſheep for the ſlaughter. Though this is not certain, we have reaſon to think that Mordecai was the penman of the whole book. It is the narrative of a plot laid againſt the Jews to cut them all off; and wonderfully diſappointed by a concurrence of Providences. The moſt compendious expoſition of it will be to read it deliberately all together at one ſitting, for the latter events expound the former, and ſhew what Providence intended in them. The name of God is not found in this book; but though the name of God be not found in it, the finger of God is, directing many minute events for the bringing about his people's deliverance. The particulars are not only surpriſing and very entertaining, but edifying and very encouraging to the faith and hope of God's people, in the moſt difficult and dangerous times. We cannot now expect ſuch miracles to be wrought for us, as were for Iſrael when they were brought out of

Egypt, but we may expect that in ſuch ways as God here took to defeat Hamon's plot, he will ſtill protect his people. The whole ſtory confirms the Pſalmiſt's obſervation, Pſalm xxxvii. 12, 13. *The wicked plotteth against the just, and gnasheth upon him with his teeth. The Lord shall laugh at him, he sees that his day is coming.*

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